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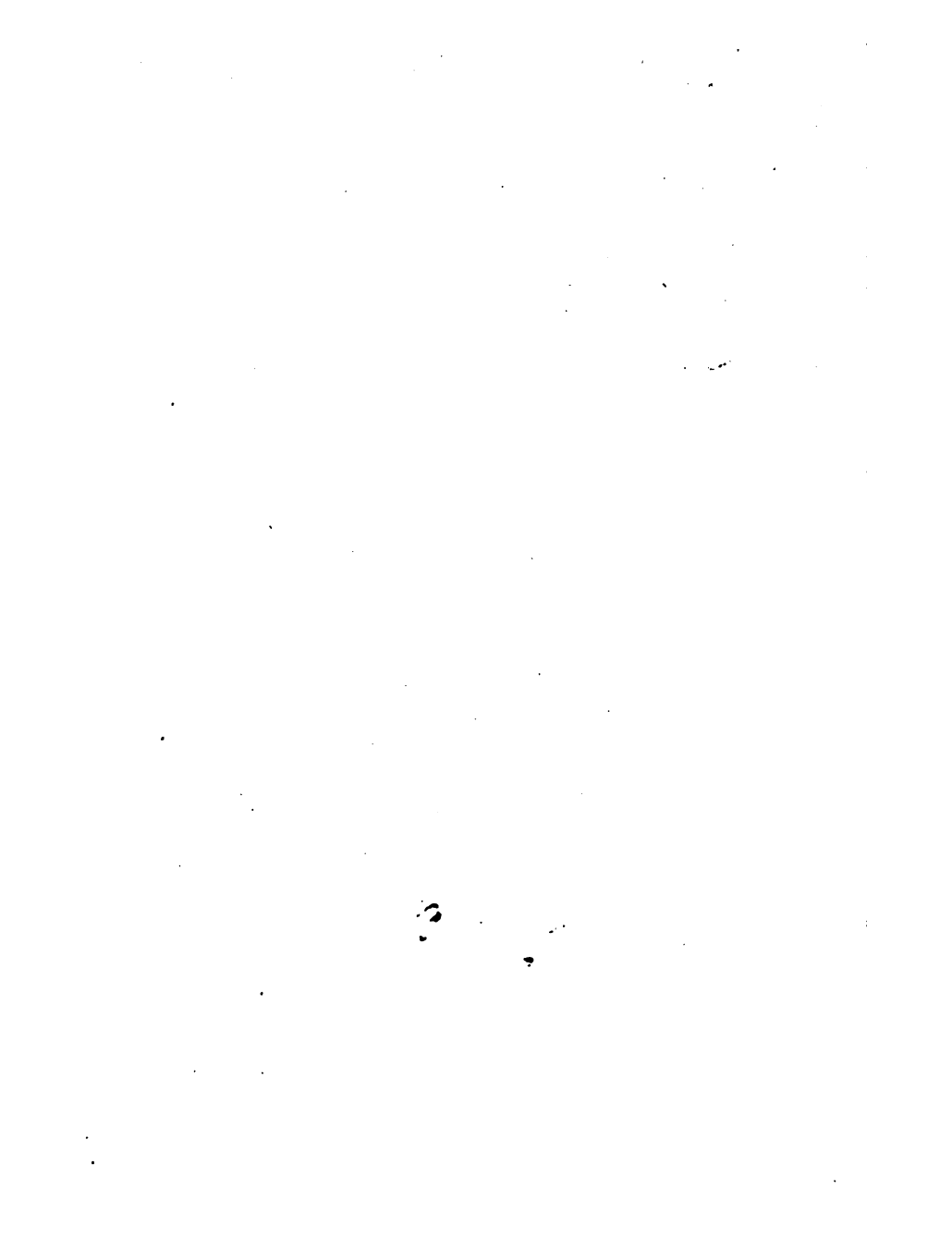
AND TEXTS ILLUSTRATED



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ILLUSTRATIVE TEXTS

AND

TEXTS ILLUSTRATED.

BY THE

REV. JAMES WAREING BARDSLEY, M.A.

VICAR OF ST PAUL'S, GREENWICH.

Second Edition, Enlarged.

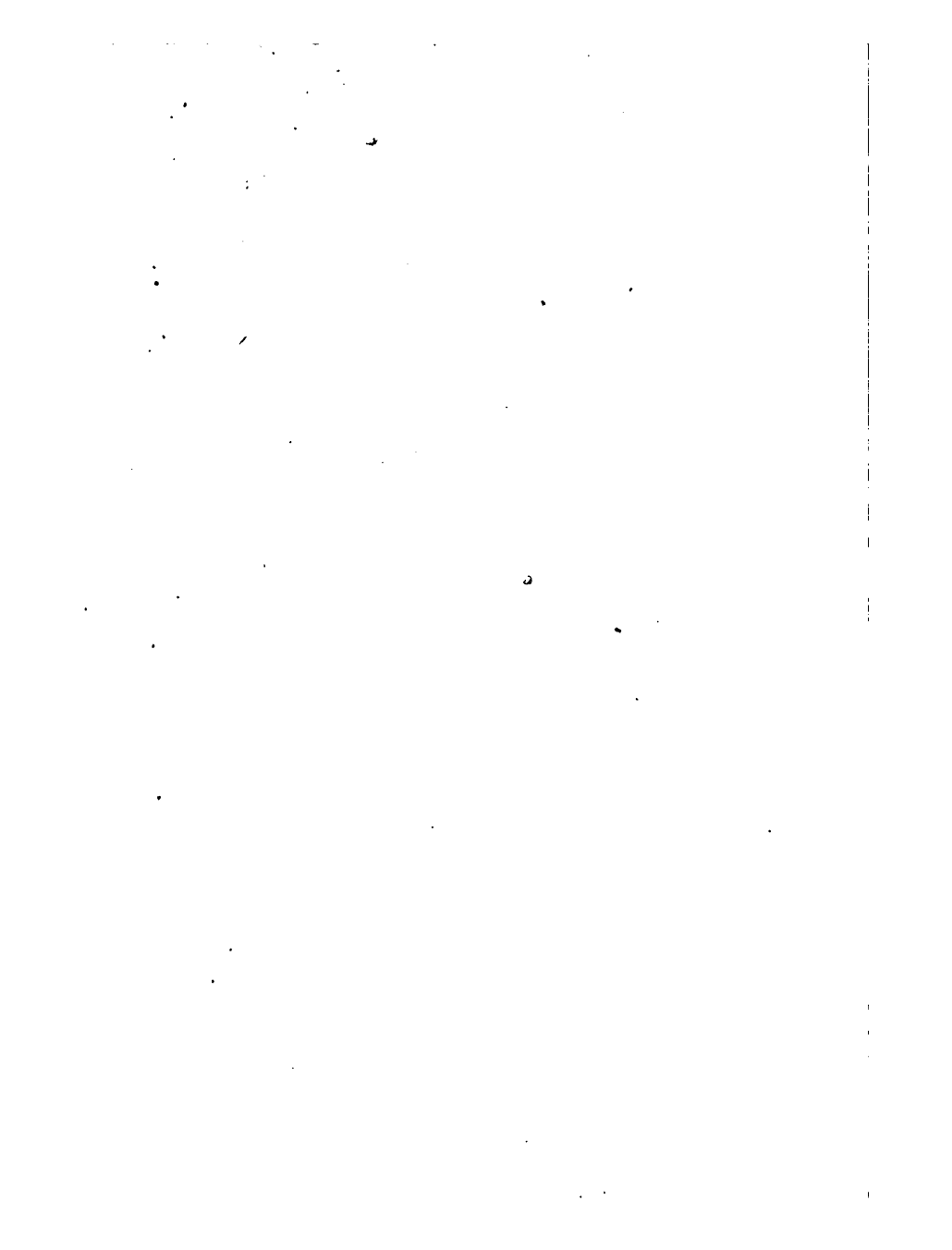


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101. i. 277.



TO THE
CONGREGATION OF ST PAUL'S.

GREENWICH,

TO WHOM IT IS MY PRIVILEGE AND PLEASURE

TO MINISTER,

This little Volume is Dedicated,

WITH MUCH SINCERE AFFECTION, BY

THEIR FRIEND AND PASTOR,

JAMES WAREING BARDSLEY.

PREFACE.

MANY of the papers in this volume have already appeared in the numbers of the "Day of Days" for 1872 and 1875. Some have been selected from a series of articles, entitled "Notes of a Tour in Palestine," written several years ago for the pages of the Sunday School Institute Magazine; others have been prepared specially for this volume. I had marked in my notebook more than a hundred other texts, which were either illustrative in their character or for which I had prepared illustrations. Many of these were of a practical and experimental character, but as my space was limited, and as the interest attaching to Palestine was never so great as now, I have chosen in their stead a considerable number of passages, which will, I trust, give some fresh information to the reader about "The Land" in connection with "The Book." My great difficulty has been to make a selection in so prolific a subject. I would

specially mention Deut. xxxiv. 1-3, as being one of the very few accounts of the view from Pisgah. I venture to think that in the exposition of Ezekiel xxxiv. 29, the reader will discover the meaning of a passage never before understood. The volume is of a very unpretending character. I should not have thought such ephemeral productions worthy of appearing in a separate form had I not been assured that many of the readers of the Magazine in which these papers appeared, struck off as they were amid the pressure of a heavy parochial charge, had derived instruction and comfort from the thoughts introduced in them. The exposition of Luke xii. 6, 7, will be for ever associated in my mind with one lately gone to her rest, who found in its simple lines a thought of great consolation: It has pleased God to make use of the simile which illustrates Micah vii. 19, to the setting free of more than one sin-burdened heart. If a single additional gleam of light should fall upon any passage of God's most precious Word through the perusal of these pages, the writer will be abundantly rewarded.

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"As in mines of gold, any one who is skilled in such matters could not bear to overlook even the slightest vein, inasmuch as it is capable of yielding great riches ; so in like manner, in the Divine Scriptures we cannot pass over one jot or one tittle without loss ; but it is necessary throughout to investigate all things. For all these things are spoken by the Holy Spirit ; nor is there in them anything which is superfluous."—*Chrysost. in Joan., Hom. xxxvi.*

"For many years," said Luther, "I have read the whole Bible twice every year. It is a tree which is large, massy, and tufted, and all its words are so many branches and twigs. There is not one of its branches, not one of its twigs, which I have not shaken, to discover whether anything could be found upon it ; and I have always discovered, even on the most slender branch, two or three apples, two or three pears, which dropped into my hands." *Watch. xxii. 61.—Quoted by D'Aubigné in his "Rationalism and Popery Refuted."*

"Look as it is on a starry night, if you cast your eyes upon many spaces of the heavens, at the first glance perhaps you shall discover no stars there ; yet, if you continue to look earnestly and fixedly, some will emerge to your view that were before hid and concealed ; so is it with the Holy Scriptures ; if we only glance curiously upon them, no wonder we discover no more stars, no more glorious truths beaming out their light to our understanding. . . . When we have obtained the knowledge of those things that are absolutely necessary to salvation, there yet remains such depths of wisdom, both in the manner of Scripture expression, and in the mysteriousness of things expressed, that, after our utmost industry, still there will be left new truths to become the discovery of a new search."—*Sermon "On the Use of the Holy Scriptures," by Bishop Hopkins.*

ILLUSTRATIVE TEXTS
AND
TEXTS ILLUSTRATED.



I.

"Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."—
MICAH vii. 19.

WHEN the man whose heart has been truly stricken for sin searches God's Word for those passages which speak of pardon to returning prodigals, many and precious are the promises which meet his eye, and which breathe peace and rest to his soul. With Micah, he is constrained to exclaim, "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of this heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again; He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and *Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.*"

Probably the simile before us has a reference to

the 15th verse, where the prophet speaks of Israel's "coming out of the land of Egypt;" when, as Moses sings, "Pharaoh's chariots and his hosts hath He cast into the sea . . . *the depths have covered them*: they sank into the bottom as a stone." Just as the waves of the Red Sea closed over the enemies of Israel, so the blood of Jesus Christ covers all the believer's sins.

The truth conveyed by this illustration is brought out still more strikingly when we think of the words "*depths* of the sea" in their more general significance. The land-surface below the waters of the ocean, with its valleys and mountains, its plains and chasms, as far as we can judge, is simply a counterpart of the land-surface above. We know that there are "depths of the sea" far greater below the surface of the ocean, than the heights of the loftiest mountain above its level. It is said that Lieutenant Maury fathomed 25,000 feet in the North Atlantic, and that Lieutenant Brooke sounded depths in the Indian Ocean even far beyond this.

After a wild and stormy night, you may have walked as I have upon a beach strewn with the planks and spars of a wreck, and seen the hull of the ship itself stranded high on the shore. If that vessel had foundered in the middle of the Atlantic or Indian Ocean, you might have sailed over the spot the next day, and not a trace of her would be seen—she would be lying in the "*depths* of the sea." God says, "I will cast all their sins"—not

into the shallow places where, so to speak, they may be cast up and seen again; but—"I will cast all their sins into the *depths of the sea*." The ocean covers the tiniest pebble and the loftiest mountain; and the ocean fulness of Christ's blood covers not only the weakest infirmities of our nature, but also the deepest depravities of our lives.

II.

“Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”—LUKE xii. 6, 7.

A RISTOTLE, one of the wisest of ancient philosophers, taught, as did the Epicureans and Academics, that the gods had a general supervision over the affairs of mankind, but that their providence was not a particular one; in other words, that it did not extend to individuals or to special things. How different from the coldness of this creed is the comfort realised by the humble disciple of Jesus, as he listens to the teaching of the Divine Word. The Master tells him that He who “tellethe the number of the stars,” numbers the very hairs of his head: that God not only has the most accurate knowledge of, but also exercises the most tender forethought for, the minutest objects of creation. The little birds which abound in every thicket “cannot fall to the ground without your Father.” He takes His disciples to the market. “Are not *two* sparrows sold for *one* farthing?” [Matthew x. 29], but if you buy two farthingsworth, is not one thrown in? “Are not *five* sparrows sold for *two* farthings?” I

tell you that that little bird which is thrown in was not "forgotten before God."

The Psalms abound with references of the same kind. How soon the tame bird knows the hand which feeds it. You may hold the seed in your closed fingers, but habit tells the bird what the garner contains. How its eyes wait upon you! Doubtless many a time did David, when a shepherd, feed each lamb or sheep with a special morsel from his hand. When contemplating God's providential care, he sings, "The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works. . . . The eyes of all wait upon Thee. . . . thou *openest thine hand* and satisfiest the desire of every living thing;" or, as it is literally, "satisfying every living thing with (the object of) its desire."

Let each reader of these lines seek to know more of the heart of God as revealed in His Word, and he will watch more closely each movement of His hand as manifested in His ways. When we know that a God of Grace lays the "foundation" of inward mercies with "sapphires," we soon learn that the fence with which a God of Providence surrounds us is a circuit of "pleasant stones."

III.

“And I will raise up for them a plant for renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land.”—EZEK. xxxiv. 29.

I VENTURE to think that the force of this passage has not been given by writers on the Book of Ezekiel, from the fact that they have not seen the point of the illustration used—“a plant for renown;” or, as it literally is, “a *plantation* for renown.”

I believe that the prophet refers to a well-known habit of Eastern shepherds. In the 23d verse we read: “And I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even my servant David; He shall feed them, and He shall be their shepherd.” “And I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.” As a consequence the pastures shall be rich with herbage; the shepherd shall lead his flock into “pastures of tenderness.” But how when the rainy season has long since past? how when the autumn is come,—when the grass is scorched and withered? how when the ground is covered with snow? At such times the Syrian shepherd leads his flock to forests which are care-

fully preserved for this purpose. Here his whole day is spent in the bushy trees, cutting down the tender twigs and the branches covered with leaves with which he feeds his flock. At such a time, when the supply of food necessarily involves much toil, the character of the shepherd comes out. Then a "good" shepherd literally "feeds" his sheep; but for his care, they must die. "I will raise for them a *plantation* for a name: they shall no more be *consumed with hunger* in the land." "And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God."

Happy is the covenant people pastured by Jehovah Jesus: For them blessing succeeds blessing: when the grass fails, He raises up a plantation. The "Good Shepherd" supplies food for the winter as well as the spring. From the experience of the past, the believer looks with holy confidence to the future. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

IV.

"Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?"—SONG OF SOL. vi. 10.

THE three noble reservoirs in the Valley of Urtâs, which the traveller passes on his way from Jerusalem to Hebron, called by the Arabs, El-Burâk—"the tanks," are, without doubt, "the pools" constructed by Solomon, of which we read in the book of Ecclesiastes: "I made me great works: I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits: I made me *pools* of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees" (ii. 4, 5, 6). The subterranean fountain which feeds the highest of these reservoirs, is most probably the "spring shut up, the fountain sealed" (Sol. iv. 12). These "pools" made the whole valley a paradise of verdure and beauty. Here was the "garden inclosed." Here the king "went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded" (Sol. vi. 11).

Almost the whole of the imagery of the book of Canticles seems to have been suggested by the visits which Solomon paid with his queen to the gardens at Etham. Josephus, I think, throws light on the passage before us. He tells us that it was the habit of Solomon to leave Jerusalem in the early morning, "sitting on high (in his chariot)," clad in a "white garment," "clear as the sun," and accompanied by 2000 horsemen,—“young men in the most delightful flower of their age,” their long hair “sprinkled with dust of gold,” clothed in Syrian purple, and yet in full armour. His escort was “terrible as an army with banners.” We have but to place his queen by his side, in “her clothing of wrought gold,” “fair as the moon,” and we have the explanation of the outward letter of the question asked by the friends of the bride, when they beheld her leaving the palace on Zion, as the first streaks of the dawn began to appear over the heights of Olivet: “Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon?” for she reflects the glory of the bridegroom who, in his glistening raiment, is “clear as the sun,” and is amid his retinue “terrible as an army with banners.”

In the words of this verse we have progressive degrees of light. This gradation may refer to the amount of gospel light enjoyed by the Church in different ages. No sooner had Adam fallen, than God, in His infinite mercy, revealed to him a coming Redeemer. The promise of the “woman’s seed” was as the first gleam of the morning shining into

the midnight darkness of Adam's soul. With the call of Abraham, and in him the election of Israel, came fresh and increasing manifestations of light. Under the types and shadows of the ceremonial law, the Gospel was more fully revealed; but the light of the ceremonial law, like that of the moon, was one of *reflection*. "As the sun paints the clouds with a variety of glorious colours, which in their own nature are but dark and lowering vapours exhaled from the earth," so, says M'Ewen, "when the Sun of Righteousness arises, even the carnal ordinances and commandments of the Law, dark and earthly as they seem, are gilded by its beams, and wear a smiling appearance." The tabernacle was but a "worldly sanctuary;" and yet to the eye of the "Israelite indeed" it was radiant with beauty; for it reflected the light of Jesus. It was "fair as the moon." Under the Gospel dispensation the Church was "clear as the sun." On the cross of Calvary, in Christ's resurrection and ascension, the Sun of righteousness shone in His meridian splendour. The cross of Christ was the noontide of Divine glory.

Following out this idea of progression, I cannot but think that the expression, "terrible as an army with banners," refers to the second coming of Christ,—the consummation of all things; when the Church shall indeed be "terrible," for "the saints shall judge the world." The Church in every age has of necessity been a "Church Militant." Whenever she has been, so to speak, in full moon,

whenever she has reflected most fully the Spirit of Jesus in her life, whenever she has held most distinctly and clearly the doctrine of justification by faith—that in Him she was “clear as the sun,” then she has most fulfilled her mission,—then she has been most adverse to her foes. Whenever she has been “fair as the moon, and clear as the sun,” then has she been “terrible as an army with banners.”

V.

"That the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice."—

PSALM li. 8.

I WAS lately speaking to the chaplain of a London hospital about a case in which we were mutually interested. My friend said, "The surgeons will break his leg this afternoon." I replied, "Is this absolutely necessary?" The answer was, "If they do not, he will be a cripple for life." The patient's "bones" were literally to be "broken," that he might afterwards "rejoice."

As the bones constitute the framework of man's body, the breaking of them is used in Scripture as a strong but expressive figure of the overwhelming grief which prostrates body and mind. Thus Hezekiah laments: "As a lion will He break all my bones." The words of the text may be taken as illustrative of God's general dealings with souls whether in convincing of sin, or in chastening by sorrow. Under the operation of the Holy Ghost the soul is taught that it cannot walk, much less run in the way of God's commandments, until the "bones" of self-righteousness are "broken;" that no man can say, "I will keep Thy precepts with

my *whole* heart," until, with David, he has learned that "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a *broken* and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

Every Christian who reads these lines knows by experience that his greatest griefs have proved his chiefest blessings, his deepest sorrows his highest joys. He can say with Paul, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Is any reader crying, with David, under a deep consciousness of sin, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed?" The bones which God has broken must and will rejoice. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; . . . and when ye see this your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb."

VI.

"Get thee down, that the rain stop thee not."—

1 KINGS xviii. 44.

EVERY person who has read Paley's "Horæ Paulinæ," or Professor Blunt's "Scriptural Coincidences," must have been struck with the argument for the veracity of the Bible, derived from the "undesigned coincidences," the "examples of consistency without contrivance," with which the Book abounds.

The eighteenth chapter of the First Book of Kings is peculiarly rich in such specimens. Take the verse before us: "Go up, say unto Ahab, prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not." The plain of Esdraelon is completely surrounded with hills; Carmel, and the hills of Manasseh gird it on the south; Tabor and Gilead and Little Hermon on the east; the hills of Galilee on the north; and lower hills fence the plain from the sea-shore on the west. After a heavy shower innumerable little streams flow from these mountain-sides into the plain beneath. The Kishon, which drains it from a mere "brook," rapidly rises into a deep and turbid torrent; whilst the plain

itself becomes a morass. When "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera," we are told that the "horse-hoofs were broken by means of the plungings of their mighty ones."

In the battle of Tabor, which was fought between the French and Syrian armies, in the spring of 1799, when General Kleber, with 1500 men sustained the attack of 25,000 men until Napoleon came down from Nazareth, many of the fugitives were drowned in the Deburich, a feeder of the Kishon, which in summer is completely dry.

Ahab, in driving from Carmel to Jezreel, a distance of sixteen or seventeen miles, would have to cross the plain. From the cause just mentioned a heavy shower of rain in a few hours would turn the paths now deep with the dust of a three years' drought into an impassable bog. Hence the admonition of the prophet: "Get thee down, *that the rain stop thee not.*"

VII.

"That we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."—ROMANS vii. 6.

THE economy of the Gospel is to put a man in a new condition, and then he will appear in a new character. St Paul says, "Now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

This statement of the apostle was strikingly illustrated in the history of Israel. The Law was given not to Israel in Egypt, but to Israel delivered out of the bondage of Egypt. God first puts Israel into a new condition—a state of liberty—before He expects Israel to appear in a new character. The fulfilling of the law was to be the test of gratitude and love for a redemption received: "And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," etc. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments."

Take an illustration of this text from daily life. We go into a mechanics' shop. The workmen leave

at 6 P.M. I enter the room at 5.45. I see one man looking at the clock—sluggishly move his tools—again look up—again work. At last the clock strikes. Down go his tools; he hastens home. I note a striking contrast in another man who seems absorbed in his work. The clock strikes, but still he works; his eye has not noted the flight of time. I linger, but still he works, and sings as he works. I go to him, and ask, "Why do you remain at work when your fellow-workman has left the shop?" He smiles, and says, "Oh, the other man is a hireling; he is paid by the hour. My father owns the shop. Of course I am anxious that his work should turn out well. I have an interest in the business. He is a good father to me," &c.

The hireling serves in the "oldness of the letter;" the son in the "newness of the spirit." "I will run in the way of Thy commandments," says David, "when Thou hast enlarged my heart."

VIII.

“Stewards of the mysteries of God.”—1 Cor. iv. 1.

THERE is, probably, hardly a reader of these pages who sometime or other has not used the phrase, “It is a mystery!” by which you meant that something had happened which you could not comprehend. It is very evident that this is not the meaning of the word as sometimes used in the New Testament, from the simple fact that our Lord said to His disciples, “Unto you it is given to *know* the mysteries of God” (St Luke viii. 10; St Matt. xiii. 11). The general meaning of the word,—I shall not attempt to speak of each distinct use of it,—is something at present hidden which will be revealed, as in 2 Thess. ii. 7, or something *which was once hidden but is now revealed*. St Paul says, “By revelation He made known unto me the mystery, which in other ages was *not made known* unto the sons of men as it is *now revealed* unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Ephes. iii. 5).

We shall find that all the great leading doctrines of Divine Revelation are spoken of as mysteries, or, if not mentioned distinctly, as comprehended in the

one expression, "Mystery of the faith" (1 Tim. iii. 9). The *Incarnation* is called a mystery, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. iii. 16). The *love of Christ to the Church*, typified by the marriage union, is called a mystery: "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and His Church" (Eph. v. 32). The *Resurrection* is called a mystery: "Behold, I show you a great mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," &c. (1 Cor. xv. 51). The *partial blindness* of Israel is called a mystery: "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery . . . that blindness in part is happened to Israel" (Rom. xi. 25). The "*Man of sin*" is called a mystery: "The mystery of iniquity doth already work." The doctrine of *Predestination* is called a mystery: "The mystery of His will" (Eph. i. 9). *Revelation*, as having its source in God, is called the "Mystery of God" (Col. ii. 2); as coming to us through the mediation of Christ, "The mystery of Christ" (Eph. iii. 4); as containing the glad tidings of peace, the "Mystery of the Gospel" (Eph. vi. 19). We see that revelation, both as to its source, its channel, and its subject, is called a mystery. The "Mystery of the faith" never could have been gained by reason, but is given by revelation. It is "the faith once delivered to the saints."

We have in the sentence, "Stewards of the mysteries," a most striking illustration of the

position of ministers of the Gospel. The steward was the chief servant who distributed to the household the food which was given to him by his master for that purpose. The position was one demanding faithfulness. "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." The steward had no business to keep anything back; his duty was to dispense the food to all; hence the words of our Lord, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season." The master decides the nature of the food, the servant distributes it. If any part be withheld, the steward wrongs his master and defrauds his charge. The Master has given to every minister of the Gospel certain mysteries, these he must preach, each, all. In the reign of Charles II., certain bankers amassed large fortunes by clipping the king's coin; they were called "clippers." Are there not many "clippers" in the ministry, men who deface the king's coin? Let us illustrate the verse before us.

A nobleman has a house with many rooms. In his absence he wishes the house to be thrown open to the public. It contains many rarities. His orders are strict. Let the visitors roam over the house, but whatever else you do, show them the rooms called "The Mysteries." You cannot mistake. I have painted the name over each door: "The Mystery of His Will," "The Mystery of the Gospel," &c. The servants, however, have their

favourite rooms. To be good guides they ought to study each room carefully; but no, of the house generally some of them know little. One man is never happy but in one special room, in this he delights. Visitors come; he at once ushers them into the "Mystery of His will." You cannot get him out of it; as to the opposite room, the "Mystery of the Gospel," he entirely forgets it, and yet the Master specially ordered that "every creature was to see it." Another servant never takes the visitors anywhere near the door of the room called the "Mystery of Iniquity." The visitors never even hear of its existence. It is evident that the faithful servant or steward is he who simply obeys the master, and shows all the "mysteries" to all who come.

If any brother minister condescend to read these pages, I would say, may both writer and reader exclaim with St Paul, "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the *mysteries* of God."

IX.

"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."—PSALM li. 7.

THE terrible sin of David in the matter of Bathsheba was, under the teaching of the Spirit of God, the means used for giving him a deep insight into the utter corruption of his heart: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Hence in this Psalm David prays, not so much for the pardon of any one particular sin, as for the complete renewal of his whole nature. He cries for pardon, but he does not forget to pray for purity. This desire for personal holiness is strikingly shown in the words, "*Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*"

"There are two words," says Dr Mant, "in the Hebrew language, to express the different kinds of washing, and they are always used with the strictest propriety." One word simply expresses the cleaning of the surface of a thing, as of a plate, or the skin,—the other signifies a washing which "pervades the substance," as in the washing of clothes. The garment is soaked through and through, so that the defilement which is in it may come out. "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and

cleanse me from my sin." Is not this idea of inward purification also implied in the illustration which the Psalmist uses of the "snow?" Our Lord compares the mere professor to a "*white-washed* sepulchre;" chip off the thin coating of whitewash from the wall, and you come to a darker substance beneath. Dig deeply into a snow drift, and it is *white right through*. May you and I, dear reader, listen to the admonition of God by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah: "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart (as a garment) from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved;" then the promise is ours: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be *white* as snow."

X.

"Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged."—ISAIAH li. 1.

MR BIRKS, in his Commentary on the Book of Isaiah, says that the "rock" and the "pit" in this verse are "two striking figures for the moral hardness and debasement of men, unrenewed by Divine grace. The separation of souls from this rock and pit needs the power of God, and can be effected by this alone. Hence they must here allude to that Chaldean idolatry in which Abraham and Sarah once lived, and from which they had been brought out by the call of God alone. The God of glory had hewn them out of this rock of stubborn heathenism, and digged them out of its pit of idolatrous abasement, so that they became the foundation stones of a living temple, the root of that tree and stock, to which the faithful of all time belong."

I have given this comment because of its simplicity and distinctness, but I believe that it is just possible that the "rock" and the "pit" were

suggested to the mind of the prophet by the Bezetha cavern at Jerusalem; in any case this special "rock" and "pit," to my mind, afford a striking illustration of the truth of the text. The entrance to the Bezetha cavern is near the Damascus gate, and is well known to those who have visited Jerusalem. This immense cave is the quarry from which the magnificent stones of the temple were hewn. Here the traveller sees the niches in the wall from which the blocks were taken, corresponding in size and form with the huge stones in the south-east corner of the Haram area. The ground beneath his feet is covered with chippings, the dressings of the stone. The mark of the chisel is seen on every side. These chambers and galleries now so silent once resounded with the workman's tool. We have most probably in this subterranean masons' yard the explanation of 1 Kings vi. 7: "The house was built of stone, *made ready before it was brought thither*: so that there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building."

"No workman's steel, no ponderous axes rung,
Like some tall palm, the *noiseless* fabric sprung."

But to return to this cavern as an illustration of Isaiah li. 1.—Above ground at Jerusalem was Solomon's temple, a priceless gem of beauty; every stone fitted into its place in most perfect line, all carefully, and some curiously wrought by the highest Phœnician art. But whence its origin?

Beneath the ground was "the rock from whence it had been hewn" and "the hole of the pit," the rugged, dark quarry, from whence it had been digged. How typical of Israel as a nation, raised to such glory, and yet her foundation stones taken out of the pit of "Chaldean idolatry," from which as Mr Birks observes, "they had been brought out by the call of God alone."

Israel as a nation was a type of Jesus: "Out of Egypt have I called my son." Israel's temple was a type of His body: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again;" and thus the temple at Jerusalem becomes a type and picture of the Israel of God, the Church of Christ, which is His body. Behold this glorious temple! As we think of the saints of God, of Moses and David, of Peter and Paul, and of those His children whom we have known, and in whom His grace has been manifest, with one of the disciples we exclaim, "See what manner of stones and what buildings!" How beauteous are the graces which adorn the believer's soul! Are these to be causes of pride? They are monuments of mercy, exhibitions of grace; behold in them from first to last the work of the Spirit! Are you children of God and heirs of eternal life? Like Abraham and Sarah, until called of Him, you were dead in trespasses and sins, heirs of eternal wrath. Are you stones of the spiritual temple, upon which the chisel of the Spirit has wrought His fair designs? "Look unto the rock from

whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit," the dark and corrupt nature, from whence ye are digged.

I cannot close this paper without mentioning one stone in the Bezetha cavern which deeply impressed my mind. It was a block which had been carefully squared by the mason's art. I wondered that it had not been removed to form part of the temple. As we came nearer I found that it had not been detached on the back side from the parent rock. The mark of the chisel was everywhere upon it, but the labour had been in vain, for some reason the work had not been finished. How many attend our churches, seem in earnest about their souls from time to time, kneel at the table of the Lord; the mark of the chisel is upon them, for they have been influenced by the pastor's care and teaching; but something keeps them back,—they are not actually separated from the world. Would that this stone from the Bezetha cavern were a silent preacher to some reader of this little volume! As you read the touching story of the young man in the gospel, you see your own image. Some one thing is keeping you back. Remember that unless you are incorporated into the spiritual temple in time, you will be left in the cavern of darkness throughout eternity. "The Spirit and the Bride say come;" Jesus says, "Come;" to whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, "you also as a

lively stone will be "built up a spiritual house."
If so, throughout eternity with adoring gratitude
you will "look unto the rock from whence ye are
hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are
digged."

XI.

“As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.”—ST JOHN xvii. 18.

EVERY traveller to Jerusalem is charmed by the little paradise of verdure at the foot of Ophel, —“the King’s Garden” (Neh. iii. 15). The eye, wearied by the monotonous grey of the bare limestone hills around, rests with delight on this oasis in the desert. Whence its verdure? This part of the valley is irrigated by the “waters of Siloah,” which still, as in the days of Isaiah, “flow softly” (viii. 6). The interpretation of the word Siloam is “sent” (St. John ix. 7). Our Lord, in sending the man that was “born blind” to this special pool, evidently intended to direct his thoughts to Himself as the Healer—the Messiah—“the Sent One of God.”

Is not Jesus a “Siloam” to His people? If your heart, dear reader, be fertile and fruitful like the “King’s garden,” it is because of the secret and “soft flowing” influences of His grace. Wherever Jesus is received, He becomes to the recipient as the streams of Siloam. “Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord”

were not your souls naturally like a "waste place?" Whence, then, these aspirations after God, these desires for holiness, these longings to glorify your Lord? "The Sent One" has fulfilled in you His promise to Zion: "He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord" (Isa. li. 3).

But, says the Saviour, "As I am Thy Siloam in the world, even so are they,—my disciples,—Siloams in the world." What a noble mission is that of the followers of Jesus! to be the Lord's conduits, to fertilise and refresh—to be as the "soft flowing waters" of Siloam in our homes and families, and wherever our influences reach. "He that watereth shall be watered also himself."

"Oh grant that I, like this sweet well,
May Jesus' image bear;
And, spending life, my all to tell
How full His mercies are."

XII.

“Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.”—
ST MARK ix. 50.

FROM the very earliest ages salt seems to have been used in oriental countries as an emblem of that which endures. We can easily see how a substance which is an antidote to corruption and decay, became the outward symbol of perpetual amity and peace,—“a covenant of salt for ever.”

Hence, to typify the imperishable love of Jehovah to Israel, an express command was given that salt was never to be absent from the altar of burnt-offering: “With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt” (Lev. xi. 13).

Every one who has sojourned in the East has some story to tell of the sacredness attached by Arabs to a compact which has been ratified by salt: how the man who one day would have plundered you of all, will the next day sacrifice everything he values, if need be, if in the meantime you have tasted his salt. I cannot but think that in the verse before us our Lord refers to this well-known fact. An unseemly quarrel had taken place amongst His disciples. “What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace;

for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be greatest." The very children of the desert teach the disciples a lesson. They had been brought "into the bond of the covenant," they had eaten of the "king's salt," had been "salted with the salt of the palace" (Ez. iv. 14). How can they dispute who are bound by the most solemn obligation to perpetual amity and love? "Have salt in yourselves, and be *at peace* one with another."

In the British Syrian schools at Beyrout, I have seen the daughters of Maronite and Druse,—of the murdered and murderer,—sit side by side in mutual love. They had tasted of the salt. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

XIII.

"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."—SONG OF SOL. iv. 16.

IN the verses preceding the passage before us, Christ has been describing His Church under the similitude of a garden. He has enumerated the variety of plants and spices which it contains. But there is no breath of air to move the leaves, to stir the fragrance of the spices. All is still; and therefore He prays for the Holy Spirit to breathe on His garden, "that the spices thereof may flow out." He invokes the reviving influences of the Holy Ghost, under the familiar emblem of the wind. It may not be unprofitable to consider the winds which are mentioned as illustrating the diverse operations of the Spirit, so necessary to make the Church and the individual member of it more fruitful and fragrant.

In the Bible we read of four prevailing winds, answering to the four cardinal points; and hence we have the expression "four winds," as equivalent to the four quarters of the hemisphere. "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live." Why are these

two special winds mentioned? Why not pray for the west wind or the east wind? We answer that the *west* wind in Palestine invariably brought rain. "When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straight-way ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is." In this allegory Solomon has depicted the rainy season as over. "The winter is past; *the rain is over and gone.*" The *east* wind is one to be dreaded; sweeping over the parched desert, it withered up vegetation. Hence the words of the prophet Ezekiel, "Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither when the east wind toucheth it?" (Ezek. xvii. 10). May the Lord, who has so graciously tended our beloved Church of England in times gone by, never send His east wind upon it, as upon rebellious Ephraim, because of our negligence, to "quicken those things that are ready to die." "An east wind shall come, the wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up" (Hos. xiii. 15).

The supplication for the awaking of the north wind and the coming of the south wind, winds blowing from opposite points of the compass, points out the diverse operations of the Spirit, which are so necessary for the garden. As Sibbes observes, "We see that the courses that Christ takes, and the means that He uses with His Church, may seem contrary; but by a wise ordering all agree in the wholesome issue. A prosperous and an afflicted condition are contrary; a mild and a sharp course

may seem to cross one another; yet sweetly they agree in this, that as the Church needeth both, so Christ useth both for the Church's good."

The *north* wind rarely blows, but is naturally the coldest of the four. We read in the book of Ecclesiasticus xliii. 20, "When the cold north wind bloweth, and the water is congealed into ice, it abideth upon every gathering together of water, and clothed the water as with a breast-plate." Nipping as the north wind is, it is most beneficial in its results. When the heavens are clouded, and the light of the sun is hidden behind a curtain of mist and vapour, the bracing and invigorating wind disperses the darkness and gloom. "The north wind driveth away rain" (Prov. xxv. 23). "Fair weather cometh out of the north" (Job xxxvii. 22).

In the 9th verse of the 37th of Job, "north" is translated in the margin "*scattering*" wind, for the reason just stated. When clouds of unbelief and sin, arising from corruption and Satan, gather around the soul—when the Sun of Righteousness is hidden from the believer's view, the north wind is needed. A trying dispensation, a fatherly chastisement, is sent, and deeper knowledge of the utter corruption of the heart, under the convincing power of the Holy Ghost, is given. The wind is keen and cutting, but how it "*scatters*" the clouds. How Jesus is sought and seen; nothing at such a time comes between the soul and "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the

image of God." It was when the north wind of affliction was blowing with its most chilling blast, that David exclaimed, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" It is the believer's comfort that all creation obeys Jesus, and therefore He can recall the north wind at His pleasure. "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the seas obey Him!"

The *south* wind blows from the Arabian peninsula, and is necessarily hot. Our Lord said, "When ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass" (Luke xii. 55). "How thy garments are warm," said Elihu, "when he *quieteth* the earth by the south wind" (Job xxxvii. 17). Here the south wind is said to calm and soothe. The Spirit not only wounds but heals; not only convinces of sin but of righteousness; not only convicts but comforts and consoles. The south wind quiets the soul, and sweetly whispers rest and peace.

"Lord, let Thy love,
Fresh from above,
Soft as the south wind blow.
Call forth its bloom,
Wake its perfume,
And bid its spices flow."

"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." Christ's prays that His Church, under the influences of the Spirit, may make her presence

felt; her goodness must appear; she must be a "fountain of gardens;" her spices must "flow out." May we each, dear reader, be not as a box of ointment closed, but like the box of spikenard broken in the house of Mary, so emblematic of the presence of Jesus, which filled all the house with its sweetness. The Master would have our name to be as a savour. May it be said of each one of us, as of Him, "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth."

"Awake, O heavenly wind, and come;
Blow on this garden of perfume.
Spirit Divine! descend and breathe
A gracious gale on plants beneath."

XIV.

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted."—PSALM cxix. 71.

IN Miss E. J. Whately's very interesting Life of her Father, the celebrated Archbishop of Dublin, a fact is recorded, as told by Dr Whately, with reference to the introduction of the larch-tree into England. When the plants were first brought, the gardener, hearing that they came from the south of Europe, and taking it for granted that they would require warmth,—forgetting that they might grow near the snow-line,—put them into a hot-house. Day by day they withered, until the gardener in disgust threw them on a dung-heap outside; there they began to revive and bud, and at last grew into trees. They needed the cold.

The Great Husbandman often saves His plants by throwing them out into the cold. The nipping frosts of trial and affliction are oftentimes needed, if God's larches are to grow. It is under such discipline that new thoughts and feelings appear. The heart becomes more dead to the world and self. From the night of sorrow rises the morning of joy. Winter is the harbinger of spring. From the crucifixion of the old man comes the resurrec-

tion of the new, as in nature life is the child of death.

“The night is the mother of the day,
And winter of the spring;
And ever upon old decay,
The greenest mosses spring.”


“It is good for me that I have been afflicted; for before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word.”

XV.

"You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."—EPHESIANS ii. 1.

I WAS walking one evening outside the walls of Jerusalem, when, as I passed the Moslem graveyard, I saw a woman kneeling by a tomb, and heard her speak—but to whom? She was addressing her deceased husband, telling him,—a regular custom among Moslem widows,—all of interest that had happened since she last knelt there. "What folly," said I to myself, "to talk to the dead!" And then came the thought—but if Jesus had been present, how different! The dead heard His voice and lived. At His command the daughter of Jairus awoke from the sleep of death, the young man of Nain arose from his bier, Lazarus came forth from his tomb.

It would be as useless for ministers of the Gospel to preach to dead souls as for the Moslem widow to speak to the corpse of her husband, were it not that Jesus is present with them. "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." "When you speak, I speak," and "the Son quickeneth whom He will." The Prophet's vision is



fulfilled in every age of the Church. The bones of the valley are still very many and still very dry; but there are yet Ezekiels set apart of God the Holy Ghost to prophesy, "Ye dry bones, hear the word of Jehovah." The command is still obeyed, and the same results still follow. The Spirit of Life still joins bone to his fellow, and clothes with sacred flesh and skin; and then by His creative power, transforms the lifeless form into a being instinct with animation, with energy and life. Hence the statement of the Apostle, "You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

XVI

"And there shall be no more sea."—REV. xxi. 1.

A THOUGHTFUL writer has observed, "That all history, however accurately written, is of necessity partly written in a language that needs to be translated, and for this purpose it must be carried away and read in the very scene where the events occurred that are described in it." This is peculiarly so with the Bible, which has innumerable points of contact with the land in which the writers lived, and in which the events narrated occurred. Not only is the language of the Bible, as that of all history, moulded by the physical formation of the country, but also by the habits, and customs, and modes of thought of its inhabitants.

The idea which the Jews had of the sea has left its impress, I think, upon this verse, and upon many others in the Bible. In passing I would observe, that the physical position of Palestine explains several facts about the sea, as described in the Word of God. The words "west," and "sea," are often used as synonymous terms in the Hebrew Scriptures, from the fact that the Mediterranean was the western boundary of the land.

Again, among the many references to the sea in

the Bible, there is no allusion to the tide, which is very natural when we remember that the authors were only acquainted with a "tideless sea." I return at once to the idea which the sea seems to have suggested to the Jewish mind. The Jews were not a commercial people. Jerusalem, their capital, was a centre of religious life, not of commercial enterprise. National exclusion prevented intercourse with Gentile nations. The Greeks built their cities on the coast, their ships were found on all waters, and were the source of national prosperity. The great cities of Israel, on the contrary, Hebron and Jerusalem, Shechem and Samaria, were among the mountains. Their only port, if you can call it such, was Jaffa, and this, as Dean Stanley observes, "only received the rafts which floated down from the coasts of Tyre." Cæsarea was a noble city, and had a world-famed harbour, but it was Gentile rather than Jewish. Its erection was a sign of national decadence; its builder was a Roman rather than a Jew.

It is interesting to note, that most of the references to the sea in the Word of God are such as speak of terror and dread, rather than beauty and delight. "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea."

Among the curses for disobedience, pronounced upon Israel from Ebal, we find recorded, as if

seemingly a climax of woe, "And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again *with ships*" (Deut. xxviii. 68). Isaiah describes the enemy of Israel, Assyria, as a wreck abandoned in a storm, but depicts the security of Zion as an inland city: "Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a *quiet habitation* there the Lord will be our glory, a place of rivers, and wide-spreading streams, wherein shall go *no galley with oars, neither shall stately ships pass thereby*" (Isaiah xxxii. 21).

Whether the words of St John are to be taken literally, we cannot say; whether the fires which shall purify the surface of this sin-stained earth at the Day of Judgment shall dry up the solitudes of the ocean, or whether its wastes shall be needed to supply a dwelling-place for the multitude which "no man can number," we are not told—it would be idle to speculate; but to the mind of John, as a Jew, the sentence, "There shall be no more sea," would suggest no diminution of pleasure in his thought of the "new earth," but rather an element of joy, when he pictured the heavenly kingdom as a region of perfect security, where terror, unrest, and disquiet should for ever have passed away. Many a broken-hearted widow, many a sorrowing parent, mourning for loved ones lost at sea, can sympathise with the feelings of John when he described the new earth as without such a remembrance of sorrow.

There is another view of the expression, "There shall be no more sea," more obvious, perhaps, to

some minds than the one which I have just stated, and which doubtless has occurred to many of my readers, as it has to several expositors of this verse—*The position of John when he wrote the words.* He tells us that he was banished to the “Isle that is called Patmos, for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” How the heart of the faithful shepherd must have been with his absent flock! How constantly must he have longed for the communion of saints! How he must have thought with tender solicitude of the dangers which beset the churches over which he had been placed! *The sea was that which separated.* “There shall be no more sea!” Happy words, speaking of union entire and complete; of fellowship dissevered. Earthly homes must be broken. The hearth we have loved in childhood and youth must be left. Many a sorrowing Jacob is now separated from his Joseph, and has to weep over the grave of his Rachel. Jonathan may love David with a love “passing the love of women,” and yet they must sever. The elders of Miletus “wept sore, and fell on Paul’s neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all . . . that they should see his face no more.” Paul had to exclaim at Cæsarea, “What mean ye to weep, and break mine heart?”

The history of the past is the reality of the present, but soon shall there be a “new heaven, and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and *there was no more sea.*”

XVII.

"The righteous shall flourish as the palm tree."—

PSALM xcii. 12.

THE full force of these words is, I think, seldom understood. The righteous man is compared to a palm-tree, not only because its presence in the wilderness indicates *moisture*, without which it could not grow (Exod. xv. 27); not only because of its *uprightness* (Solomon's Song vii. 7; Jer. x. 5); not only because the more it is *weighted* the more fruit it yields—whence the Latin proverb, "*Palma bus pondere crescit*" (Heb. xii. 11); not only because the *height* of the palm determines its age (Eph. iv. 13); not only because it is an *evergreen* which outlives the seasons, and resists the force of storm and tempest, and thus furnishes a striking emblem of victory (John xii. 13; Rev. vii. 9),—but specially because, being an *endogen*, its growth is from *within*; and thus, while the centre is soft, it presents so hard an exterior that no parasitic plant can destroy its life.

"The righteous," says the Psalmist, "shall flourish as the palm-tree;" the internal work of grace in his heart enables him to present a firm front against

the temptations which would otherwise destroy the force of his spiritual life. As Professor Balfour, to whom I am indebted for the thought, observes in his "Botany and Religion," "The allurements of the world twine round him, and he is surrounded by trials and temptations; but they do not impede his growth: he towers above all, pointing heavenwards."

XVIII.

"Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes."—SONG OF SOL. ii. 15.

IN this well-remembered verse of the Canticles, the "little foxes," or jackals, are spoken of as devastating the vineyards. Their fondness for the grapes is well known in the East. These "little foxes" have become quite "household words," as illustrative of what are called—by no means a happy expression—"little sins." A vineyard, if it be tolerably well fenced, is much more liable to harm from the little foxes than the great ones, because the less get in through holes which exclude the greater. Christians generally guard against great temptations, but are often caught unawares by allowing what appear little temptations to enter the soul. It was the statement of a very evident truth when John Newton said, that many a child of God who was enabled by His grace to check every rebellious thought, if He removed some loved one by death, lost his temper if a child broke his vase, or a servant committed a blunder.

These "little foxes," completely hidden beneath the large leaves of the vine in the terraces of the

vineyard, sucking the "tender grapes," and crushing and bruising others at every movement, are very picturesque as illustrations of those "secret sins"—the hidden faults, the admitted foolishnesses of thought—which do so much to destroy the tender buds, our aspirations for higher and holier things; and thus retard the growth and mar the beauty of our religious life.

The early Fathers constantly applied the text to the excommunication of heretical teachers from the Church of Christ; and this interpretation of "the foxes" is quite in accordance with the language of Scripture. God, when speaking by the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel, says, "O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts." And then as if to say, "The presence of these 'foolish prophets' in your midst arises from your own carelessness," he adds, "Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither hedged the hedge for the house of Israel." If the rulers of the Church of Christ in different periods of her history had listened to the command of her Head to nip heresy in the bud, to cast out the "little leaven" which so soon leavens the "whole lump," to "take" "the *little* foxes," many "tender grapes" would have been saved, and they themselves would have been spared much trouble.

I have introduced the verse to the reader as being, to my mind, one of comfort in the presence of so much error in the Church of Christ in the present

day. The passage suggests this thought:—The “little foxes” would not have appeared had it not been for the “tender grapes.” They did not trouble the vine when it seemed dead; but when the winter was past, and the “vines with the tender grape” gave “a good smell,” then they were seen in the vineyard. Elements of evil are inseparable from times of religious revival. The same conditions which produce the preaching of truth produce the teaching of error. In winter the clod has no apparent life—the good seed has been sown in it, and lies beneath its surface. You do not see the wheat, neither do you see the weeds—it is winter. By and by the same sun, the same soil, the same showers—the influences which call forth the one—will soon evoke the other. The tender blades of wheat have hardly pierced the soil before the weeds begin to crop above its surface. One hundred years ago Christianity seemed dead in this country. As regards religious life it was winter time, both in the Church of England and out of it. Were there any Romanising teachers in her pale? They were unheard of. When, however, the winter was past, when a mighty revival took place, then they began to appear. The philosophy of the fact is not hard to be seen. I, however, simply state the fact itself. With the “tender grapes” appeared the “little foxes,” who have done and are doing so much to “spoil the vines” of that beloved branch of the Catholic Church to which we belong.

XIX.

“For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”—
HEB. ii. 10.

THE verb to *make perfect* in the Greek signifies also to *consecrate* to an office. Hence the same words which the English version of Lev. viii. 22 translates “ram of consecration,” are rendered in the Septuagint as “ram of perfections.” The priest under the law was “consecrated,” or “perfected,” to his offices by the blood of a ram. Christ was “made perfect” or “consecrated” to His office as Priest to the Church by His own sufferings—by the blood of His own sacrifice. “And being *made perfect* He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.” (See also Heb. vii. 28, where “consecrated for evermore” is in the margin “perfected.”)

Though this is probably the primary meaning of the Apostle, yet it may refer generally to the fact that it was necessary for the Lord to suffer in order that He might be perfectly able to sympathise with His brethren in their sorrows. “In all their

afflictions He was afflicted." "He by *passion*," as it has been said, "acquired *compassion*." "For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."

It is recorded of the late Captain Vicars that he singularly won the hearts of the soldiers under his command. Whilst keeping his own position he put himself into theirs. An incident in connection with his life in the Crimea will illustrate the verse before us. In those bitter winter nights, which even now we can hardly bear to think of, when our brave soldiers slept out in an almost Arctic cold, they naturally gave way to some murmurs; but when the men under Captain Vicars learned that he absolutely refused to avail himself of special protection and comfort so long as his men suffered, and that he preferred to share their trials, all murmurings ceased. How could they complain when their captain for their sakes volunteered to share their hardships! As regards his sympathy with and his relationship towards the men, their captain was "made perfect through sufferings."

XX.

"For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one ; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren."—HEB. ii. 11.

THE object of the writer of this Epistle to the Hebrews is, in the first place, to declare the Deity of Jesus,—His communion of nature with the Father ; then His humanity,—His communion of nature with ourselves. The one leading thought of the second chapter of the epistle is the *Brotherhood* of Jesus.

In this Epistle the verb to *sanctify* or *make holy* is used in a sacrificial or ceremonial sense,—it means the setting apart or purifying by blood. The high priest, argues St Paul, who "sanctified Israel," made an atonement for them, and "made them clean from all their sins before the Lord," was of the same flesh and blood with themselves. He who entered into the holiest in their behalf was their brother. "Take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother . . . that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office." "He who sanctified and they who were sanctified were all of one" nature. Jesus Christ, who is now exalted at the right hand

of the Father, and wears our nature, in His infinite condescension does not disclaim the relationship. No; for this very purpose He formed the connection. He became our *Brother* that He might become our *Priest*. "For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

It is told of the celebrated Archbishop Tillotson, who was the son of a Yorkshire clothier, that upon one occasion his father came to see him in London. It so happened that when the father arrived there the son was acting as host to a most distinguished party. Instead of being ashamed of his relationship with the old man in his plain dress and broad Yorkshire brogue, and instead of keeping him in another room, as many would have been tempted to do, he brought him forward, and with great deference presented him to the company as his "father."

The great "High-Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus," though raised to such marvellous dignity, is not ashamed of His relationship with us, poor and degraded though we be. He speaks and thinks of us continually now, and when we reach the portals of heaven He will acknowledge us before angels and men as His brethren. "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

XXI.

"I will declare Thy Name unto my brethren ; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee."—HEB. ii. 12.

ST PAUL, if he be the writer of this Epistle, as I think he is, quotes this verse from the Twenty-second Psalm to prove his statement in the previous verse, "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." Fear of death was the life-long trial of Jesus. Death was to Him the penal infliction on sin, but that not His own. "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, was heard in that He feared." The words of the Twenty-second Psalm, "the Psalm of the Cross," express in prophecy the dying experiences of Jesus. Thus we read that His prayer for deliverance from death, *i.e.*, from its curse and sting, was heard ; that the gloom of the cross departed ; and that, ere He gave up the ghost, a gleam of sunlight shone into the midnight darkness of His soul. In adoring gratitude He exclaims, "I will declare Thy Name"

—speak of Thy dealings—“unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.”

Never was this passage so forcibly impressed on my mind as in St Paul's Cathedral, on the day of the National Thanksgiving. England, ceasing to be Jacob, had become Israel. In answer to a nation's prayer, the heir to the throne had been recalled from the very entrance of the dark valley of the shadow of death. It was a thrilling moment when the Queen and Prince entered the Cathedral—when the vast congregation *stood* up before them; and more deeply so when Queen and Prince *knelt* before the King of kings. The text of the Archbishop—“Members one of another”—reminded us that prince and people, peer and peasant, were “all of one”—that the nation was but a family. The Prince of Wales, by his very presence, as he returned thanks to God for His great mercy, as it were before the whole nation, seemed to exclaim in the words of the Prince of the house of David, “I will declare Thy Name unto my *brethren*: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.”

Throughout eternity, Jesus, as the Priest and Elder Brother of the Church, will lead the praises of His *brethren* in songs of gratitude for His deliverance from death.

XXII.

“It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea : for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God.”—EZEK. xxvi. 5.

THE city of Tyre is now simply a miserable fishing village, doing a small trade in tobacco grown in the neighbourhood, and in millstones from the Hauran. What a striking contrast to the emporium of commerce, the city in whose bazaars were found luxuries which enriched “the kings of the earth with the multitude of” her “riches and of” her “merchandise !”

No city or port in Syria seems to speak to the heart with such power of the truth of prophecy as Tyre, whose fall was predicted with such clearness and accuracy of detail. Some reader may say, But did not Ezekiel prophesy that the very site of the city should be unknown? I would remind the interrogator that there were two Tyres—Palætyrus, the old or continental Tyre, and Insular or New Tyre. As Bishop Newton observes, some prophecies refer to the one, some to the other. No one knows where Palætyrus stood. When Alexander besieged Insular Tyre, his only hope of taking the city was to construct a mole, and thus connect it with the mainland. In forming this mole, his materials

were taken from the ruins of the ancient city. "I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more: *though thou be sought for, yet thou shalt never be found again*, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. xxvi. 21). And again: "And they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust *in the midst of the water*." It is a matter of history, how after a seven months' siege, Alexander took the city, and burnt it. "Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and He will smite her power in the sea; and *she shall be devoured with fire*" (Zech. ix. 4).

I was much impressed, when visiting Tyre, with the sight of the literal fulfilment of the verse at the head of this fragment. The present village,—city I cannot call it,—stands upon the junction of the island with the mainland to which I have already referred. After passing through some narrow filthy bazaars, we came upon the harbour, where one or two fishing boats represented the navy of the city "whose merchants were princes." All at once our attention was attracted to some nets spread out to dry. We were on the site of Insular Tyre,—that Tyre which in her haughtiness had said, "I am a god: I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the sea." "With our own eyes" we saw the fulfilment of the twice-repeated prophecy: "*Thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon*."

"Dim is her glory, gone her fame;
Her boasted wealth has fled;
On her proud rock,—alas! her shame,—
The fisher's net is spread."

XXIII.

"Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing."—*St MATT. xxiv. 46.*

ANY person who compares the Christian literature of the present day with that of any period since the blessed Reformation, must be struck with the place which the Second Coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ holds in it. For generations our clergy had been praying, "Thy kingdom come," but how few had entered Enoch's ministry, saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints." Many of those who were looking back with humble faith to the Atonement of their Priest, forgot to look forward with joyful hope to the return of their King. Now, it would seem that in many a pulpit the subject of the Second Coming of Christ holds that due position which it had in the preaching of Peter and Paul. As a consequence, much attention is given generally to the subject of prophecy. But how much of evil has mingled with the good! Hastily written books, propounding the wildest theories, are eagerly read and as easily received. Who does not know some of God's people who stretch text after text upon the rack until they

are made to cry out "Yes" to their favourite view? Saddest of all, practical work for the Master seems to be neglected in some instances, whilst this most solemn of all subjects is being continually discussed, not always in the best spirit, as to the how, and the when, and the where, "of the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

A master leaves his home for a journey to a distant land; the servants know not when he will return; but each has his or her work to do. As time rolls on, all desire to see the master, to whom they are sincerely attached. The question of his return is often discussed, until it becomes a positive evil. John and the cook hold different theories, not only as to the time of his return, but also as to the manner of it. John is sure master will come back by sea. Cook thinks he will return by land. John says, "One thing, I know, we shall see his cab come down East Street." Cook says, "I am certain he will come down West Street." They stand in the window and look out by the hour; and unless you had seen it, you would hardly credit what time they waste over this endless discussion, and what warm words they use. You could hear them all over the house. They appeal to the housemaid, who sometimes joins them. She answers, "All I know is, I expect my master any moment, and I have much to do." She thought he would have come yesterday—everything was dusted—his room was ready. She knew he loved flowers, and she had been pleased to deny herself to have some on his

table. He may come to-day. So again she carefully goes over everything. The vase is refilled. You may see from the smile which beams on her face from time to time what is in her thoughts: "Master may come to-day!" and she thinks of his hearty "Thank you!"—"Well done, good and faithful servant;" and his smile of gratification as his eye catches the flowers. "Blessed is *that* servant whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing."

XXIV.

"With Whom is no variableness."—ST JAMES i. 17.

THE general idea of the apostle in this passage seems to be, that just as in the physical world all the changes from light to darkness, from day to night, the clouds and shadows, arise from the earth and its movements, and not from the sun, so all sin and the consequences of sin, as seen in the moral darkness which surrounds us, all the change and decay, the gloom and the sadness, are in us and from us, and not in Him and from Him; for "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." "Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no *variableness*, neither shadow of turning."

The word "*variableness*" is in the original *parallage*: hence our word *parallax*. What is the meaning of the term? It is "the apparent displacement of an object caused by a change of place in the observer." For instance, if a reader of *The Day of Days* looked at the sun from Oxford or Worcester, and at the same time another of our readers looked at the sun from London, each

observer would see the sun in an apparently different point in the sky. The "variableness" is in them, I need not say, and their positions, and not in the object which they view. On account of this "apparent displacement" astronomers refer all their observations to the earth's centre, and thus the "variableness" is destroyed.

This so strikingly illustrates the truth St James sets forth, that, without entering into any discussion as to whether the apostle used the term "parallax" as a technical term of astronomy, we at once note its application. How often Christians speak as if God's countenance were changed toward them? How often do they see Him, so to speak, in a different point in the heavens, forgetting that all changes of feeling, all doubts and fears, all "variablenesses" are in themselves, and not in Him. These clouds which hide their Sun are vapours of earth and not from heaven. "I the Lord change not."

There is one centre of observation to which we should continually refer all our uncertainties with reference to God's dealings and His seeming change of position towards us, and that centre is the Cross of Christ. Here all "variableness" ceases, and God is seen by all His people in the same character. From this stand-point the adoring expression of each heart is, "God is love." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Again, all the diverse views which are held by

sceptics with reference to God and His attributes, with reference to the Deity of Christ and His atonement, and with reference to the work of God the Holy Ghost and His influence on the human heart, arise from the fact, that God is considered from the stand-point of each man's reason, and not from the central point of Revelation. "Of His own will begat He us with the *Word of Truth*." Hence the unity of doctrine in the Church of Christ in all ages.

The stand-point of the Bereans is the stand-point of the Sixth Article of the Church of England, and all who take it see with St James that God is the "Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

XXV.

"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."—ST JOHN iv. 14.

EVERY one who has read with any care the addresses of Christ must be struck, not only with their illustrative character, but, which is very important in the use of illustrations, with their perfect adaptation to the case in point. The force of His imagery is heightened from the fact that the emblems and figures used were taken from objects which the audience had in view at the time He addressed them, and from external things with which their minds were thoroughly familiar, and in which they had a special interest.

When the multitudes sought Him at Capernaum "for the meat that perisheth," He began to speak "of the meat that endureth unto everlasting life." In the case before us, the great Teacher gradually leads the mind of the woman of Samaria from the material water which she was drawing from the Well of Jacob—of which drinking she would thirst again—to the "living water" that He could give, and which would be in her "a

well of living water springing up into everlasting life."

There is a beauty in the illustration "living water," which does not appear at first sight. It is not necessary to visit Jacob's Well to see it; and yet it was there that it first occurred to my mind. Never shall I forget the vividness and reality which the fourth chapter of St John assumed when read in the scene of the narrative. In order to witness the Samaritan sacrifice, we had spent the previous night on Gerizim, the hill mentioned by the woman of Samaria when she said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain." (Jacob's Well lies at the foot of Gerizim.) In the tent of Amram, the Priest of the Samaritans, we had had an illustration of the 9th verse: "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." In an answer which Amram had given to a question asked by a friend, "What do you think of Jesus Christ?" he used these words, "I am sure He was a good man, *else the Jews never would have crucified Him.*"

The dislike of the Samaritan to the Jew gave a touch of deep reality to the conversation recorded. As we read the chapter each allusion was vivified. The 5th verse referred to Joseph. There was his tomb just to the north. The 11th verse told us that "the well is deep." And so it was. It took 2½ seconds from the time the pebble was dropped before we heard the splash in the water below.

We read in the 35th verse our Lord's words to His disciples, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest"—and there before us was the plain of Mukhna, one of the finest corn-lands in Palestine. In no spot in Syria did I more forcibly realise the *religio loci* than at Jacob's Well. In saying this, I think I express the general feeling of travellers to the Land of the Bible. We must at once turn to the illustration before us, "*living water*," the meaning of which, as I have said, only dawned upon me when I visited the spot.

Jacob's Well, deep as it was, and cool as its waters doubtless were, was only an artificial well, a cistern for the collection of rain and the drainage of the land. It is constantly dry. When I visited it in the spring of 1868, it had several feet of water, from the fact that in the previous winter there had been an unusual fall of rain. In 1872 I found it perfectly dry. Doubtless in the time of our Lord, from reasons into which we cannot now enter, it afforded a better supply, and yet in seasons of drought this well must have been useless. It was a *beer*, a well or cistern, and not an *ain*, or spring.

The water, says Christ to the woman of Samaria, of which I am speaking, and which I can give you for the thirst of the soul, is not from a well but from a spring. In the parching drought of summer, as well as in the rains of winter, it gushes forth a gurgling, sparkling stream. It is a well of

"living water springing up into everlasting life." The experience of the woman of Samaria must have responded, just as the experience of every worldly soul now responds, to the hidden meaning conveyed in the statement of our Lord, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." Pleasures apart from God, like flowers severed from the tree, however sweet for a time, soon wither and die. Like the lightning's flash they have a momentary gleam, but they leave darkness behind. When the water of the well is most needed, in the trying hours of scorching heat, in sorrow and sickness, in pain and in death, the well is dry. Worldly friends, like birds in the sunshine, are cheerful and sing; but when the summer is past, when the winter days come, when all is darkness and gloom, they have fled and are not.

Not thus is the friendship of Jesus and the presence of the Spirit. The believer's joys are not external, but internal. He is dependent upon no earthly cisterns, for the water that Christ gives to slake the thirst of the soul is "*in him* a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Grace is like a bird which sings as sweetly, nay, far more sweetly, in autumn and winter than in summer and spring. It is a perennial fountain ever flowing. Therefore did our Master say, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him *shall never thirst unto everlasting* (this is the Greek), but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of *living* water springing up into everlasting life."

XXVI.

“The Lord liveth; and blessed be my Rock.”—PSALM xviii. 46.

AS we read the Bible we find all nature baptized and made instrumental in promoting the Saviour's glory. Every attribute of Jehovah-Jesus is presented to us under the type and shadow of some outward thing.

The title of Rock as applied to Christ is perhaps the most common in the Bible. Is a rock the strongest thing in nature? the surest *foundation*? “I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.” Was a rock a place of *defence*? “He shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks.” Were the rocks and fortresses places of *refuge*? (1 Sam. xiii. 6; xiv. 11.) “Be thou my strong rock, whereunto I may continually resort; Thou hast given commandment to save me, for Thou art my strong rock and my fortress.” Did the rock afford *refreshing shadow* from the sultry heat, or from the scorching wind? “A man shall be as a

hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Is a rock one of the most *unchanging* things in nature? "The Lord liveth; and blessed be my Rock." "The strangers shall *fade away*" (ver. 45), but "the Lord *liveth*."

As we note the stability of a rock, we are reminded of the eternity and immutability of Immanuel. The "everlasting hills" speak of the "Rock of Ages." "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is *everlasting* strength." The priesthood of Aaron was one of succession: "They truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this Man, because He *continueth ever*, hath a priesthood which passeth not from one to another." Ministers die, relations die, friends die, but, says the believer, "The Lord liveth; and blessed be my Rock."

Oliver Heywood, in his "True Mercies of David,"* gives a striking illustration of the power of this truth when realised in the soul: "A woman truly godly for the main, having buried a child, and sitting alone in sadness, did yet bear up her heart with the expression 'God lives;' and, having parted with another, still she redoubled 'Comforts die, but God lives.' At last her dear husband dies, and she sat oppressed and most overwhelmed with sorrow. A little child she had yet surviving,

* Quoted by Rev. C. H. Spurgeon in his "Treasury of David," *in loco*.

having observed what before she spoke to comfort herself, comes to her and saith, 'Is God *dead*, mother? is God *dead*?' This reached her heart, and, by God's blessing, recovered her former confidence in her God, who is a '*living* God.'" "The Lord *liveth*; and blessed be my Rock."

XXVII.

"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."—
JAS. iv. 6.

THE answer of Augustine to the question, "What is the first thing in religion?" "Humility." "And what the second?" "Humility." "And what the third?" "Humility,"—contains a truth which stands out more distinctly the more it is viewed in the light of Scripture. Humility is the one thing required in every disciple who enters the school of Christ, and the most difficult lesson which He sets before His most advanced scholars. Augustine said truly, when speaking of pride, "That which first overcame man is the last thing he overcomes." To the scholar in the sixth form, as well as the scholar in the first, the Master says daily, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Never did any man write more sweetly on the subject of humility than Archbishop Leighton, when commenting on the verse before us. He says: "God's secret dews and showers of grace slide off the mountains of pride, and fall on the low valleys of humble hearts, and make them pleasant

and fertile. The swelling heart, puffed up with a fancy of fulness, hath no room for grace. It is lifted up, is not hallowed and fitted to receive and contain the graces that descend from above." Growth in humility is the great evidence of growth in grace.

Archer Butler gives us a striking illustration of this truth. He somewhere says, that if we stand by the margin of a pool of water we see our faces reflected on the surface; but if we could be raised above it, the higher we are raised, the lower should we see ourselves (by reflection) sinking in the lake below. And thus the nearer a man gets to heaven, the more does he sink in his own esteem. The progress which St Paul made in humility has often been given by comparing three expressions in his Epistles, with the supposed dates when they were written. "Not meet to be called an *apostle*" (1 Cor. xv. 9), A.D. 59. "Less than the least of all *saints*" (Eph. iii. 8), A.D. 64. "*Sinners*, of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. i. 15), A.D. 65.

The more humble our hearts, dear reader, the more will God delight to enrich us with grace; and the more we are enriched with grace the more humbly and gratefully shall we delight to return Him all the glory. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble!"

XXVIII.

"What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?"—ST MATT. xi. 7.

WHETHER John the Baptist asked the question recorded in the third verse of this chapter, for the benefit of his disciples, or for the confirmation of his own wavering faith, I do not argue. Whatever might be the motive which actuated the message, our Lord sought to remove from the minds of the multitudes around him any erroneous impression which they might form as to the character of the great preacher of repentance, and in doing so, made use of a very simple but striking illustration:—When "ye went out into the wilderness to see" John, "was it to see a reed shaken with the wind?"

The "wilderness," *i.e.*, the valley of the Jordan, abounds in cane-brakes. After leaving the Pass of Kuneiterah, when riding towards the north end of the Dead Sea, as my eyes rested on the mountains to the east, I could not but think of the eleventh of St Matthew, and the verse (2nd) which speaks of the incarceration of John; remembering that the fortress of Machœrus, the place of his

imprisonment, lay somewhere amongst them. But it was not until I came upon a jungle of reeds at a brackish fountain called Ain Jehâir, that I thought of the force of the illustration before us. The tall canes reached a height of ten or twelve feet. The least touch of the finger, the faintest breath of wind, and these miniature palm-trees, with their slender stalks and their large tufted heads, were in motion.

Dr Tristram, in his "Natural History of the Bible," says that one of the reeds is so "slender and yielding, that it will lie perfectly flat under a gust of wind, and immediately resume its upright position." What more striking figure could be used of a yielding and vacillating character than that of a reed such as this?

I may add, that these reeds are turned to a variety of uses. The more slender joints are used as pens, and are well adapted for forming the square Hebrew characters. With such a reed probably the sponge was raised to the lips of the dying Saviour (Matt. xxvii. 48).

XXIX.

"Casting *all* your care upon Him."—1 PET. v. 7.

HOW much the anxieties of life are increased by forgetting the little but comprehensive word "*all*" of the text! What father might not learn a lesson from his child, with whom he is starting for a journey. His little boy says, "Father, you will have to carry the big bag, I cannot; and I will carry the little one." The strong father smiles, and says, "I think you had better let me carry both." They start. After a few minutes, the little bag becomes a great burden, and the child overheated and weary, says, "Father, you had better take the little bag too."

One of the greatest lessons of life is for a child of God to let his Heavenly Father carry *every* burden; to cast all his care upon Him.

Little trials are a Christian's great temptations. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." "Truly," says Archbishop Leighton, "the godly are much in the wrong to themselves by not improving this their sweet privilege. They too often forget this their

sweet way, and fret themselves to no purpose; wrestle with their burdens themselves, and do not entirely and freely *roll them over on God.*" Many a man who never doubts God's care of the whole Church to the minutest particular, is tempted to distrust God's interest in the little things that concern his own daily life. "Do I confide in Him," says the same writer, "for the steering and guidance of the whole ship, and shall I be peevishly doubting and distrusting about my pack in it?" The same age that invented the telescope, brought out the microscope. The same grace that reveals distant things as near, ought to discern our least cares as great to a Father's love. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

XXX.

"The length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal."—
REV. xxi. 16.

ONE of the most striking emblems under which the Church is presented to us in the Word of God is that of a city. We see at once that the figure is most appropriate.

Jean Dailé says, "By a city or state we understand a multitude of people,—united in one body, governed by the same laws, enjoying the same rights, subject to the same prince, and having among them the same form of policy."

All these conditions belong to the burgesses of the New Jerusalem whose names are written in the "Lamb's Book of Life," the sacred register in which the name of every citizen is enrolled. But whilst the "Church on earth and those above but one Communion make," and are spoken of as one city,—“Ye are come unto Mount Zion,” says the apostle, addressing the Hebrew converts, “to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,”—the spiritual Zion is presented to us under two entirely different aspects, to represent the differ-

ences of condition between the Church on earth and that in heaven. Isaiah in one place describes this city as "a *strong* city;" having "walls and *bulwarks*," and with gates *closed*, else he could not say, "Open ye the gates" (xxvi. 1, 2.) Each word speaks of defence and danger. The same prophet in another place speaks of the city as having its gates open continually: "They shall not be shut day nor night" (lx. 11); her enemies are "utterly wasted." The one, I need not say, speaks of the church militant; the other of the church triumphant. In the chapter from which I have selected the verse under consideration the apostle depicts the Church in her glorified state: "I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." To speak of a city as a "bride adorned" is an oriental conception of great beauty. The Moslems of the present day speak of Cairo as the "Bride of Saladin." Each stroke of the pen adds beauty to the description, and each symbol used is an exquisite emblem of precious truth.

I have chosen the text, because I think the height of the city being equal to the length and breadth affords an illustration which suggests much comfort. Before noting it, let us observe one or two leading points in the imagery employed. John pictures the city of "pure gold, like unto clear glass." Gold, as being the most precious of metals, doubtless represents the preciousness of the Church; but it does more than this, it tells us

that the Church was the Bride of Jesus. Throughout the East gold was a sacred metal. It was never employed in any service except that which was royal and divine.

Archbishop Trench, in his "Commentary on the Seven Churches," says that in the Zend-Avesta "golden" is always "synonymous with heavenly and divine." Then again, as regards the *foundations*, they are described as "precious stones," materials in their nature indestructible and in their beauty imperishable.

This city is founded upon the doctrines preached by the Apostles of the Lamb, truths which are imperishable, for they centre in Christ, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

The city is spoken of as "four-square:" doubtless this figure symbolises the symmetry of the glorified Church." Each stone is "made perfect in the fulness of spiritual grace." Hence the perfect proportion of the whole. "The length of Faith, the breadth of Charity, and the height of Hope," are all equal. Not only shall there be entire unity, but also exact uniformity. Every stone is in line with the corner-stone. The Divine Architect as He scans its proportions, and as He beholds its matchless symmetry, tells us by the pen of His servant, "the city lieth *four-square*."

Last of all, let us for a moment observe "the *gates*," as they, I think, are connected with the "height" of the city. The position of the gates: "On the east, three gates; on the north, three gates;

on the south, three gates; and on the west, three gates;" doubtless signifies that the inhabitants of the city should "come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." Dean Alford thought that the idea of the "height" of the city being equal "to the length and the breadth," pictures not only the city, but the rock upon which it was built, as "recalling somewhat the form of the earthly Jerusalem on its escarpment above the valley of the Kedron."

The word "gates" tells us that a new idea is introduced. The apostle does not confine himself to the one idea of a city. He has already called the Church "a Bride." The portrayal of the "height" being equal to the "length and breadth" suggests the idea of a *house* or *home*. As Bishop Wordsworth tells us in his commentary on this chapter, the word ordinarily used for the gates of a city never occurs in the Apocalypse. The word "gate" is used eleven times, and always means the gate of a dwelling-house. It is the word used in the Acts of the Apostles, where we read that when Peter "knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to ask who was there, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness."

In ancient Rome the houses were built to an enormous height. It is true that the palaces of the nobles occupied large areas; they were not cramped for space; but combine the two,—have a palace

covering a vast area and rising to a height equal to its length and breadth, and you have the conception of a palace in which there are not only banqueting halls for the guests of the hour, but innumerable rooms in which the friends of the prince may stay. The measures of the house given in this chapter give to the mind the conception of a home which will meet the requirements of all the members of "the household of faith," a "multitude which no man can number." "*In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*"

XXXI.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest."—
HEB. x. 19.

THE word "boldness" in the original signifies properly "freedom of speech,"—the openness with which a child addresses a parent. This spirit of filial confidence, founded upon the perfection and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, is strictly opposed to the restraint, the spirit of legal bondage, with which Old Testament saints worshipped Jehovah.

In the tabernacle were three different degrees of access to God: the outer court (the access of the people); the holy place (the access of the priest); and the holiest of all (the access of the high priest)—the nearest approach of any.

A writer on this Epistle has illustrated these three different degrees of nearness to God, as existing in the "worldly sanctuary," by the three distinct relationships to the master of a house, of a servant, a friend, and a son. At table, the servant stands and waits his master's commands; the guest, who has a nearer approach, sits and holds converse as a friend. Suddenly the child of the

family opens the door, rushes in, finds his way to the father's knee, and puts his arms around his father's neck. This is the nearest approach of all.

When Christ entered into the "holiest," "even heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us," He effected an entrance for His people: "I go to my Father and your Father." The words of St Paul, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest," are but a typical expression of his statement in the Epistle to the Romans: "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

XXXII.

“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity ; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”—Ps. li. 5.

IN this verse David speaks of original sin, not as an excuse for actual sin, but to show that his actual sin had given him a deeper insight into the complete corruption of his nature. There was poison in the stream, because there was poison in the fountain. His transgressions flowed from a heart naturally at enmity with God. Twice over does he tell us that his mother was a handmaid of God (Ps. cxvi. 16; lxxxvi. 16); and yet he says, “in sin did my mother conceive me.” “Though she was by grace a child of God, she was by nature a daughter of Eve.”

Never shall I forget a visit which I paid to the leper hospital outside the East Gate of Damascus, which tradition says occupies the site of Naaman's house. A woman was crossing the courtyard, whose loathsome features seemed all but eaten away by disease. In her hands—the fingers of which were almost consumed by leprosy—she held a sweet looking infant, as fair and pretty a child as

one could desire to see. The contrast was most painful. Life and health and innocence seemed to sleep in the arms of sin, disease, and death. I said to the missionary who accompanied me, "Surely the woman is not the mother of the child?" He said, "Yes, she is; the child does not show the leprosy now, but it is in the blood, and before long it will probably appear; and if the infant live long enough she will be as bad as the mother."

"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" The Church of England, in her 9th Article, echoes the voice of Scripture as to "birth sin," when she says that "Original sin is the fault and corruption of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam."

XXXIII.

“And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks.”—ISAIAH lxx. 10.

THE physical formation of Palestine is very simple; —a chain of mountains running down the land, north and south; a long maritime plain, or series of plains, on the west; and the Ghor, or trench of Jordan, on the east. The prophet, in the 9th and 10th verses of this chapter, making Sharon to stand for the whole of the lowlands on the west, of which it formed the most important part, and Achor to represent the valley on the east, comprehends the entire land when he says, “I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place to lie down in, for my people who have sought me.”

Whilst doubtless the passage has a literal interpretation, it is also figurative of the great spiritual blessings of the Church of Christ in gospel times.

The Lord's people have not only the defence of the hills, and the privileges of Zion the “holy mountain;” they have also, to illustrate the rich fulness of their heritage, Sharon and Achor. Sharon

was the broad, rich tract of land between the mountains of the central part of Palestine and the Mediterranean, stretching from Carmel to Joppa. It was celebrated for its rich pasturage and its bushy trees. Isaiah more than once speaks of its beauty. When describing the calamities of Israel, he says: "The earth mourneth and languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down; Sharon is like a wilderness." (Isa. xxxiii. 9.) Speaking of Messiah's kingdom, he says, "The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God." (xxxv. 2.) The flower of Sharon was chosen as an emblem of Messiah Himself: "I am the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the valleys."

The force of the passage before us is brought out when we remember that David's flocks were fed in the lowlands of Sharon: "And over the herds that fed in Sharon was Shitrai the Sharonite." The great source of its fertility lay in the amazing quantity of water beneath its surface. Wherever labour is employed in the present day it yields a prolific return. The gardens in the neighbourhood of Joppa are celebrated. Every garden,—and there are hundreds of them,—has one or two, and even three or four, wells from which water is raised in the season, day and night, and which flows in numberless streamlets to irrigate the plants and trees. What will the whole plain be when the literal seed inherit Sharon? Sharon was actually a fold for

the Lord's flock, in the days of the apostles (Acts ix. 35). But speaking figuratively, what rich pasturage has Messiah for His sheep? "The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters." Wherever a shaft is sunk, so to speak, water flows. Here is the source of all the Christian's blessings—the Spirit given in answer to prayer, "for my people that have sought me," (ver. 10), freely, abundantly, continually. With joy the believer draws water out of the wells of salvation. What rich feeding do the Lord's sheep find in the ordinances of the sanctuary, in private meditation, in the prayerful study of the Word!

As we think of the country whose mountains and springs, whose trees and plains, whose physical features, were emblematic of spiritual blessings, with faith let us enter into the promised land; as the elect people, let us rejoice in our heritage. Are we the Lord's sheep? "Sharon shall be a fold of flocks." "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon? . . . If Thou know not . . . go Thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock."

XXXIV.

"And the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in."

—ISAIAH LXV. 10.

AMONG the many incidents in the history of Israel, none contain a more remarkable illustration of Christian experience than the events which occurred in the valley of Achor, which lies in the neighbourhood of Jericho, and forms part of the valley or plain of the Jordan (Josh. xv. 7).

"The valley of Achor," as the margin tells us (Josh. vii. 26), means "the valley of trouble." God had wrought a mighty victory for Israel in the destruction of Jericho—strategically the most important city in the east of Canaan. The fame of Joshua, the Lord's servant, "was noised throughout the whole country," but a grievous trespass was committed: "Achan the son of Carmi" took of the accursed thing; sin was in the camp, "and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel." Then it was that this valley became the scene of Israel's great disaster, when her men fled before the men of Ai. This humiliation led to inquiry from God. Israel was searched, the sin was

detected ; Achan, the troubler of Israel, was stoned. When the sin was cast out and Israel was purified, the place of her disaster became the scene of one of her mightiest triumphs : where Israel sighed and wept, there she learned to sing and hope.

Hosea strikingly spiritualises the narrative. After speaking of God's judgment against the Jews because of their idolatry, he too proclaims promises of reconciliation : " I will give her," saith the Lord, " her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope ; and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth." Hosea speaks of " the valley of *trouble*" as a place of *singing*. Isaiah speaks of it as a place of *rest* : " And the valley of *trouble* a place for the herds to *lie down* in."

When the hand of God is upon any believer because of sin ; when he has learned something of his own weakness in spiritual defeat ; when he turns humbly anew to God ; when by God's grace the sin is searched out and purged ; then, where before he was weak, he becomes strong, and the victory obtained in this " valley of trouble," becomes a " door of hope," of future conquests, telling him that at last He shall be more than conqueror through Him that loved him. The valley of Achor is, physically, the lowest valley in the world ; and this is the place where, in a figure, Messiah's sheep are to rest : " Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Of this valley we may say figuratively what the

inspired record says literally,—it is “well watered everywhere, even as the garden of the Lord.”

Whilst the plain of Sharon may represent the objective blessings enjoyed by the spiritual “seed,” the valley of Achor probably indicates the subjective blessings, “the peaceable fruits of righteousness,” the quietness and rest of soul given to those who are exercised by the chastening of a Father’s hand. Many a reader of this comment counts amongst the chiefest possessions of the Canaan into which he has entered, “the valley of Achor,” or “trouble;” and with Isaiah he can testify that it is a place “to lie down in.”

XXXV.

"The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry."—Ps. xxxiv. 15.

IF the superscription or heading of this Psalm be correct, it was written by David in a time of great affliction, and yet it is a Psalm of thanksgiving (see 1st verse). Manton somewhere observes, that just as music, when conveyed over the water, sounds the sweetest, so praise in pensiveness, thanks amid tears, makes the sweetest music in the ears of the God of heaven.

The principal thought of this Psalm is the comfort which the afflicted enjoy from the realisation of God's presence. This comes out strikingly in the verse before us: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous." As the little infant creeps along the floor, the eye of the parent carefully watches it. Does the child go near the fire? Immediately the parent snatches it from danger. Wherever the righteous are the eye of the Heavenly Father is upon them, to watch, to guard, to guide, to keep them. But the verse has a still more precious significancy. Whatever we love, we desire

to look upon. The mother fondly gazes on her sleeping infant, not because of its necessities, but because of her love. So perfect are the righteous, through the comeliness which God puts upon them when He robes them in the righteousness of Jesus, that the eye of holiness and love rests upon His children with infinite delight and satisfaction.

“His ears are open unto their cry.” Let us continue the same illustration. I enter a cottage and engage in conversation with the woman of the house. Her infant is in its crib, up-stairs; the little one gives a feeble cry. I do not notice it,—she does; the parent’s ears have been “unto its cry,” as the original is.

The comfort of the righteous amidst their sorrows is not only that the “eyes of the Lord are upon them,” but that their Father’s ears are listening—waiting for their cry. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

XXXVI.

"And the water ran round about the altar : and he filled the trench also with water."—1 KINGS xviii. 35.

THE abundant supply of water implied in this verse, at the time of a famine created by a three years' drought, has been one of those incidents constantly laid hold of by sceptics as one out of many supposed inaccuracies in the Word of God. Professor Blunt, in his "Undesigned Scripture Coincidences," part 11, ch. xxii., falls into a grave mistake in his anxiety to meet the difficulty, when he says, "Let us remember the local position of Carmel, that it stood upon the *coast* . . . that the water was therefore probably *sea-water*, and all the difficulty disappears." The scene of Elijah's sacrifice is one of those sites about which there is and can be no doubt. It lies at the *eastern* end of the ridge of Carmel, at a distance of hours from the sea. To have fetched water such a distance was impossible. Van de Valde, to whom we are indebted for the happy explanation of this verse, says that the sea is "an absurd explanation." After investigating the neighbourhood of the site,

what was his delight, "to discover below the steep, rocky wall of the height on which he stood—250 feet, it might be, beneath the altar plateau—a vaulted and very abundant fountain, built in the form of a tank, with a few steps leading down into it, just as one finds elsewhere in the old wells or springs of Jewish times."

But, suggests the reader, why was not this fountain used by the people at the time of the drought? I answer that the top of Carmel was so covered with forest and thicket that it was all but inaccessible. Hence the force of the words of Amos: "Though they dig into hell, thence shall Mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down; and *though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel*, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, &c." (ix. 2, 3). But, again objects the reader, why was not this special well dried up with the rest? In the first place, it was vaulted over by a roof, and under the shade of the trees, and therefore would not suffer from evaporation to the same extent as those exposed to the hot air: and, in the next, the fountain is a perennial one, as Dr Tristram observes in his "Land of Israel" (p. 119). "The roof partially remains, the water is some depth, and is perennial. This was corroborated by the existence of molluscs (*neritina michonii*) attached to the stones within the cisterns. In that three years' drought, when all the wells were dry, and the Kishon had sunk

to a string of pools, and then finally was lost altogether, this deep and shaded spring, fed from the roots of Carmel, remained." Josephus, who must have been perfectly familiar in his day with the current tradition of the transaction,—one of the greatest in the history of Israel,—when narrating the event, says, "He, *i.e.* Elijah, ordered them to fill four barrels with *water of the fountain*, and to pour it upon the altar" (Ant. book viii. chap. xiii. sec. 5).

XXXVII.

“For our conversation is in heaven : from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ : who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.”—
PHIL. iii. 20, 21.

IN this passage the Apostle urges the members of the Church at Philippi to persevere in their life of faith, from the thought of a great blessing which they would receive at the second coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As the Israelites anxiously awaited the return of the high priest from the holiest, so ought they to be looking for the return of Him who was even then offering up the incense of His intercession on their behalf in the heavenly sanctuary. But the point before us is that the apostle appeals to what I would call secondary motives. He says, “Our *citizenship* is in heaven (or rather, ‘our manner of life is that of citizens of heaven’), from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ,” who, at His appearing, will bring a great blessing to His waiting people, for “He shall *transfigure* our *body of Humiliation* that it may be *conformed* unto His *body of glory*.”

Some years ago, as I was walking late one evening on the banks of the Mersey, I suddenly came upon a group—a woman and three or four children—sitting on the shingle and steadily gazing seaward. I noticed that they were thinly and poorly clad for so cold an hour. A ship was every moment expected which contained a husband and father. “He was kindness itself,”—how they longed to see his face! Then came out the fact that when he came they would be re-clothed. How anxiously they desired the absent one for his own sake; but they could not entirely forget what he would bring with him.

St Paul encourages the watching family—the Church—to continued simplicity of faith by reminding them that, when the Lord Jesus Christ appears, each member of this family shall change their dress of humiliation for one of glory. It is lawful for the spiritual Israel to desire the advent of the High Priest; not only that they may behold Him who has “tarried so long in the temple,” but also that they may receive the blessing which He will bring: “For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, . . . not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon; that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”

XXXVIII.

“Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.”—PSALM lxxviii. 13.*

THOUGH the railway line from Alexandria to Cairo is over a perfectly flat country, yet travellers find the ride anything but long. The least thing which rises above the surface of the plain, whether camel or ass, house or tree, woman or child, stands out in the evening sky with a distinctness which no one can realise but those who are familiar with Egyptian atmosphere and Eastern light.

At one of the side stations I saw an illustration of this text which had been suggested to me by one of Miss Whately's books. The village consisted of a few miserable mud hovels over which rose the minaret of a small mosque. On the flat roofs of these dwellings—houses I cannot call them—was a sort of second story, formed of half-baked “pots” intended as a

* A great variety of opinion exists as to the meaning of this verse and the rendering of the word “pots.” In the illustration I have simply followed the English version.

cote for the pigeons which were reared for the Cairo market. The birds, startled at the approach of the train, flew upwards. As they poised their wings, bathed in the rich mellow light, they seemed "covered with silver;" whilst the feathers of the breast, on which the shadow of the wings were cast, seemed of "yellow gold." What a striking emblem of the Church in the world,—of each Christian who dwells amidst so much that defiles, yet is kept "unspotted" by the grace of God. "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

XXXIX.

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep : for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."—Rom. xiii. 11.

DOUBTLESS many readers of these pages have been among the number of the thousands of travellers who each year witness the sunrise from the culm of the Righi. So anxious were you to behold the sight, that you rose from your bed the moment you heard the sound of the horn which announced that the night was far spent and the day was at hand. Hastily dressing, you were soon silently and earnestly watching for the first gleam of light in the eastern sky. It may be that some one of you turned round to see whether your friend and fellow-traveller was sharing your eager anticipations, and found him wanting. You at once hastened back to the hotel and knocked loudly at his door. He, too, had been awoke by the blast of the horn, but being weary, was half asleep. You exclaimed, "Do you know the time? It is high time to awake out of sleep, for the sight for which you have travelled so far, is far nearer than when first you were roused." He, too, was soon among the silent band of watchers,

and with you beheld the King of Day as he crowned each snow-capped peak, with roseate hues, and lit up the Lakes of Lucerne and Zug and Lowerz below, and many a distant valley, until the whole panorama was bathed in his glorious light.

St Paul, as a watchful sentinel in the Church, as one who was eagerly expecting the glorious appearing of His Lord and Master, earnestly exhorts the Christians at Rome to live in no debt but that of love (see ver. 10). He seeks to awaken them from their indifference by reminding them that the "day of the Lord," the consummation of their "salvation," was nearer than when "first they were roused from their sleep of sin." "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."

XL.

"There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them."—JOSHUA viii. 35.

I HAVE chosen this verse as one of our illustrative texts, because the passage is one of those assailed by Bishop Colenso in his book on the Pentateuch. In his preface, he tells us that the main result of his examination of the Pentateuch is, "that the narrative, whatever may be its value and meaning, cannot be regarded as historically true, is not—unless I greatly deceive myself—a doubtful matter of speculation at all, it is simply a question of *facts*." Never was a book so full of transparent fallacies. Let us note the one before us. When writing on this passage, *i.e.*, on the reading of the Law in the ears of all Israel, he says, "How, then, is it conceivable that a man should do what Joshua is here said to have done, unless indeed the reading, 'every word of all that Moses commanded,' with 'the blessings and cursings according to all that is written in the book of the law,' was a mere *dumb show*, without the least idea

of those most solemn words being *heard* by those to whom they were addressed?—for surely no human voice, unless strengthened by a miracle of which the Scripture tells us nothing, could have reached the ears of a crowded mass of people, as large as the whole population of London.”

Five years ago, some friends and myself took the opportunity of a visit to Gerizim to test the accuracy of this objection. Others have done the same. The spot was evidently chosen, not only because of its sacred associations in the past, but because of its peculiar adaptation to the occasion. Mills, in his book on “The Modern Samaritans,” says:—“Those who have seen the spot, and have examined it, can readily realise the scene. Just where the two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, approach each other nearest, are the two lower spurs, looking like two noble pulpits, prepared by nature, and here the Levites would stand to read. The valley running between looks just like the floor of a vast place of worship. The slopes of both mountains recede gradually, and offer room for hundreds of thousands to be conveniently seated to hear the words of the Law. The first time I stood upon that lower spur of Gerizim, the whole scenery struck me forcibly as if *Divine Providence had conformed its physical features on purpose to meet the requirements of the occasion.*” Again, no one but those acquainted with the rarity of air in Palestine can form any idea of the distance to which sound is carried. Let me give a general

instance before turning to the special one before us:—"As I sat astride a projecting rock on the north peak," says Dr Tristram, speaking of Masada, near the Dead Sea, "I could have looked down from my giddy height 1500 feet on both sides and in front, and yet so clear was the atmosphere, and so extraordinary its power of conveying sound, that I could carry on conversation in the camp below, and compare barometers and observations."—"Land of Israel," p. 311.

In the case before us, a place was chosen because of its peculiar and special acoustic properties. We are told that Jotham "went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim and lifted up his voice, and cried and said unto them, Hearken, ye men of Shechem" (Judges ix. 7). Dr Tristram, referring to this event of the reading of the Law, says:—"There is no difficulty, much less impossibility, in the problem. In the early morning we could not only see from Gerizim a man driving his ass down a path on Mount Ebal, but could hear every word he uttered as he urged it on; and in order to test the matter more certainly, on a subsequent occasion two of our party stationed themselves on opposite sides of the valley, *and with perfect ease recited the commandments antiphonally.*"

I return for a moment to the evidence of Mr Mills, that "out of the mouth of two or three witnesses every word 'may be established.'" He and two friends made the following experiments. Mr Mills ascended Gerizim, his friend, Mr Williams,

clambered up Ebal, a third friend remained in the valley. He says, "I opened my Bible and read the command concerning the blessings in Hebrew, and every word was heard most distinctly by Mr Edwards in the valley, as well as by Mr Williams in Ebal. Mr Williams then read the cursings in Welsh, and we all heard every syllable. . . . It was our impression at the time, and still is, that if the whole area before and around us had been filled with the hundreds of thousands of Israel, *every soul among them would have heard every note and word with perfect clearness*" (p. 59). Dr Robinson, a most cautious and accurate writer, speaks of a place in the Lebanon where the voice can be heard for two miles.

Now for my own experience. My father, the Rector of St Anne's, Manchester, and a friend, Mr Haworth, the Rector of St Catherine's, Manchester, stood in the middle of the plain—the floor, so to speak, of that sublime place of worship once crowded with so vast an assembly. My elder brother, the Incumbent of St Saviour's, Liverpool, and another friend, stood on the spur of Gerizim—I stood on the opposite spur of Ebal. The day was against the experiment. The air was moist, and there was a slight wind. Not only was a conversation carried on with raised voices, but the following incident occurred. My father said to his friend, *sotto voce*, "I did not quite catch what L. said" (our friend on the spur of Gerizim). He and my brother returned, and said to my father, "Did you

not say to Mr Haworth, '*I did not quite catch what L. said?*'"

If Bishop Colenso had tested *facts*, he would never have indulged in such *speculations*. In the words of the Rev. J. W. Burgon, in his "Inspiration and Interpretation," quoted by Dr Colenso himself, "From such 'free handling' the cause of sacred truth can never suffer."

XLI.

"Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth."—

ST. JAS. i. 18.

THE apostle, having stated in the context that "every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights," mentions as the most striking example of this truth, the regeneration of the soul. Not from any necessity on God's part, nor from any merit on ours, but of His own free sovereign will "begat He us." "I will love them freely." The complete freedom of this act is brought out in the word "begat," in the Greek, in a manner which is not seen by the English reader. The word means *maternal conception*. This word is only used in one other place in the New Testament, in the 18th verse of this chapter, and is there translated "conceived." The apostle shows from the use of the word in the first instance, that sin is the offspring of temptation and inclination or "lust." In other words, the heart of man is the mother of sin. Having given the parentage of sin, he gives the parentage of holiness. Note the con-

trast. Is the heart of man the mother of holiness? We have inclination and power to conceive sin when the temptation is presented : have we inclination and power to produce holiness, when it is implanted by Him who is the Father of "every good and perfect gift"? No, says St. James ; the heart of man is the mother of that which is evil, but not of that which is good. Of our will we conceive the bad : "Of His own will conceives He in us" the good. "With reverence be it said," says Bishop Wordsworth, "in the work of our regeneration, He is the Father of lights ; and if we be 'lights in the world,' it is because as a *mother* also He has given birth to us 'by the word of truth.'"

But this word not only brings out an important doctrinal truth, but also contains a thought of much comfort. The various relationships of life are among our choicest blessings ; but just as all the colours of the rainbow are comprehended in one pure white ray of light, so all the varied forms of affection, whether appearing in the love of a father or mother, husband or wife, brother, sister, or friend, have their origin in Him who "is love." Each special phase of affection in the creature must be in the Creator in an infinite degree. And yet how often is this forgotten ! If a father be removed, the Christian immediately thinks of Him who is the "Father of the fatherless ;" but let a mother be taken, and he forgets to reason that that love which came out of God must be in God. David seems to have realised this when he sang, "When my father and my *mother* forsake me,

then the Lord will take me up " (Ps. xxvii. 12).
" Can a *woman* forget her sucking child, that she
should not have compassion on the son of her womb?
Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee "
(Isa. xlix. 15).

XLII.

"Without the camp shall his habitation be."—Leviticus xiii. 46.

ANY one who has visited Jerusalem may have seen the lepers standing day by day near the Jaffa gate, soliciting alms from those passing the threshold of the city, which they themselves were not allowed to enter. Most travellers who have either witnessed this painful sight, or visited the houses of the lepers at the Zion gate, must have recalled the words, "Without the camp shall his habitation be."

The bitterest dregs in the cup of sorrow which the leprous Jew had to drink must have been his exclusion from the holy city. The Jew loved Zion, not only with all the ardour of patriotism, as the centre of national interest, but also with all the depth of religious devotion, as associated with his most sacred feelings. Whilst the Israelite, who was ceremonially clean, entered with joy the portals of the city with the words of the anthem on his lips, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord: our feet shall stand within Thy gates, O Jerusalem:"—the leper, in the bitterest

of captivities, could only weep when he remembered Zion. No type so strikingly brings out the separating influences of sin as that of leprosy; telling the sinner in no uncertain tones, that unless his sin be pardoned, his leprosy cleansed, he shall never enter the gates of the heavenly city, or as a member of the "holy priesthood," offer up sacrifices of praise in the courts of the temple above. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." The exclusion of our first parents from the garden of Paradise, consequent upon their sin, was the first type of the same spiritual truth: "Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

Howells in one of his sermons finely says, that when Adam sinned, God having locked the gate of Paradise to prevent the entrance of man, cast the key into the very depths of hell. There it lay, and man must for ever have been excluded—"without the camp," the place of God's dwelling, whether typified by garden, camp, or city, must his habitation have been—had not the Son of God with His Father's will and pleasure wrought out a deliverance. As He stood on the edge of the fiery abyss—the wrath of God due to man's sin—He drew back. Again He looked into the terrible gulf. His soul was melted within Him like wax. Then, with a love

incomprehensible were it not Divine, He plunged into its depths; found the key; ascended up on high; led captivity captive; opened the gate of Paradise; and now the kingdom of heaven is open to all believers. Well may the apostle, after stating that Jesus "suffered without the gate," add, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."

"Almighty God, who through Thy only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and *opened unto us the gates of everlasting life*; we humbly beseech Thee, that as, by Thy special grace preventing us, Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end."

XLIII.

"O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs [*i.e.*, the cliffs], let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice ; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."—SONG OF SOL. ii. 14.

THIS verse forms part of the well-known passage in which Solomon, under Divine inspiration, as a skilful artist, paints, as it were, with a few strokes, an exquisite picture of a Syrian spring. There is no poetic licence, as some suppose. Each allusion is made by one who carefully observed and copied nature. The time when "the singing of birds is come" strictly accords with the appearance of "flowers on the earth," the blossoms of the pomegranate, the tender grapes on the vine, the green figs, and "the voice of the turtle." The return of the turtle-dove from warmer climes is in Syria an evidence of the dawn of spring or early summer ; just as in England the note of the cuckoo tells us that the "winter is past." "The *turtle* and the crane and swallow observe the time of their coming" (Jer. viii. 7). Dr Tristram in his "Natural History

of the Bible," writes: "Search the glades and valleys even by sultry Jordan, at the end of March, and not a turtle-dove is to be seen; return in the second week in April, and clouds of doves are feeding on the cloves of the plain."

Interesting as it is to note the accuracy of the letter of this inspired allegory, more deeply interesting is it to read its spirit. Whilst the "singing of birds" doubtless represents the spiritual joy which rises in the believer's soul when the "winter is past," when "old things pass away and all things become new," the "voice of the turtle" may probably represent the mourning for sin which is inseparable from a spiritual revival, and which tells us that spring is come.

The plaintive note of the turtle-dove is used in the Bible as an emblem of deep sorrow. "We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves" (Isa. lix. 11). By a natural sequence of thought, the writer passes from the turtle in the verse before us to speak of another species of dove—the rock-pigeon—as combining in its habits a fuller emblem of spiritual experience. It has in common with the voice of the turtle-dove the same sadness of note. Hence Ezekiel says, "They that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys [*i.e.*, of the rocky passes, the ravines], all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity" (vii. 16). Unlike the turtle, however, it avoids the trees, the haunts of men, and builds its nest, as Solomon tells us, "in the clefts of the

rock, in the secret places of the stairs"—i.e., of the cliffs; hence the words of Jeremiah, "O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities and dwell in the rocks, and be like the dove that maketh her nest in the side of the hole's mouth" (xlviii. 28). Here is its security; it has not talons to fight with, but swift wings to fly with. It would be a prize for every bird of prey, were it not for its secret hiding-place.

What more exquisite image can nature supply of a soul helpless in the fight with Satan, sin, and self, fleeing for refuge, not to the rock of Sinai—there is no cleft in it—but to the smitten Rock in Horeb, "which rock is Christ," and there, alone with Jesus, "in the secret places of the cliff," making confession of sin? "I did mourn as a dove, mine eyes fail with looking upward. O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me."

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

This cry of the new-born child makes sweet music in the ears of Immanuel, for He "sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied." "Let me see thy countenance." "Black" as you confess yourself, yet you are "comely" in the comeliness which I have put upon thee. "Let me hear thy voice," for in the note of my dove I ever hear the voice of the Spirit, and therefore it is sweet. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit

Itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God " (Rom. viii. 26, 27).

XLIV.

“O woman, great is thy faith : be it unto thee even as thou wilt.”—
ST MATT. XV. 28.

THE story of the Syrophenician woman has been bequeathed by the Holy Spirit to the Church in all ages as an encouragement to perseverance in prayer. There can be no greater mistake than to imagine that because an answer to prayer is not immediately given, therefore the petition is denied. Jesus, in the case before us, dealt with the woman of Canaan—I say it reverently—as His Father dealt with Himself. Not only had Jesus to *ask* for the blessings which He received,—“Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession” (Ps. ii. 8), but also to ask perseveringly. We hear Him say, “I *waited patiently* for the Lord; and He inclined unto me and heard my cry.” The continued supplication of this woman was a sure evidence that her prayer was answered from the first petition, inasmuch as strength was given her to persevere. God gives patience to wait, and the patience given is itself an evidence that He hears

our prayer. God loves to be wrestled with, and delays to answer that He may continue to hear the voice of His Spirit, which is so sweet to His ears.

Archbishop Usher, in his sermon on "The Throne of Grace," gives an exquisite illustration of this thought. "It is said in the Canticles, honey is under the lips of the Church: why so? It is because there is no honey sweeter to the palate than spiritual prayers to God. And therefore God delays to answer thee because He would have more of it. If the musicians come and play at our doors and windows, if we delight not in their music, we throw them out money presently, that they may be gone, but if the music please us, we forbear to give them money, because we would keep them longer, for we like the music. So the Lord loves and delights in the sweet words of His children; and therefore puts them off and answers them not presently."

In the case of the Syrophenician woman, we see that Christ, in each answer, held out some little hope to which her faith could cling; and faith is like a vine which lays hold of the least projection of the wall with its tendrils, and thus climbs upward. God, while He delays to answer, gives hopes which faith may grasp. Then when He answers, with Divine generosity He says, "Great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

XLV.

"I am come into my garden."—SONG OF SOL. v. 1.

IN the verse before us, as well as in the passage immediately preceding it, Christ compares the Church to a garden. "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse."

No more striking illustration could be given of the Church than the emblem employed. This was specially the case as regards the garden of Solomon, described in this book, with its plants and flowers so delightful to the eye, with its fruits so sweet to the taste, and its spices so pleasant to the smell—when we remember that several of the plants mentioned were not indigenous to the soil, but brought there from foreign lands. "Spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices," were exotics—from the highlands and plains of India, from Southern Arabia, and the far East. This garden, thus considered, becomes an illustrative prophecy of the kingdom of Messiah which was to include the Gentile as well as the Jew, "that they might be called (whether Gentile or Jew) trees of

Righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified." The idea is strengthened by calling the Church, in chap. iv. 15, "a fountain of gardens." Her streams were to refresh many lands, and in her mission she was to create gardens amid many distant wastes—the parched wilderness of the Gentile world was to be glad because of her, and the desert was to "rejoice and blossom as the rose."

I have chosen the sentence which heads this paper, "I am come into my garden," as one of our illustrative texts, because I wish to suggest to the mind of the reader a thought of a different character—viz., that man seems universally to delight in a garden.

The very emblem is suggestive of pleasure. The culture of a garden seems one of the purest of pleasures. An English statesman of former times said, when writing of a garden, "If we believe the Scriptures, we must allow that God Almighty esteemed the life of man in a garden the happiest He could give him, or else He would not have placed Adam in that of Eden." The delight of the Man Christ Jesus is His garden. No sooner does the Church pray, "Let my beloved come into His garden," than He immediately answers, "I am come into my garden." The second Adam has one deep element of interest in His Paradise which the first Adam had not in Eden. In His garden each tree has been planted and watered, trained and tended by Himself. Endless as is the variety, our Solomon

knows them all, from the tiny hyssop to the stately cedar. When Dioclesian was invited to resume the imperial purple, he exclaimed, "Ah, could you but see those fruits and herbs of mine own raising at Salona, you would never talk to me of empire!" Though Jesus is so highly exalted, His heart is amid the "fruits and herbs" of His "own raising" in the garden of the Church on earth. Hence it is that He has established a second garden, or Paradise—the Church in Heaven, so that He may be gradually transplanting to His more immediate presence His trees from one to the other. The Church in heaven might often exclaim, "My Beloved is gone down into His garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies."

Whenever we are removed from the garden on earth, may it not be to hear Christ condemn us as fruitless trees to be cast out and burnt, but rather to hear Him say, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

XLVI.

“Holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true.”
—HEB. ix. 24.

THE Church of the Holy Sepulchre, with its Romanesque façade and western dome—its shrines and chapels—its past so historically attractive, is in the present religiously repulsive. Even as I write, what a relief it is to turn in imagination from this “house of merchandise,” this congeries of shams, to leave behind its court crowded with “buyers and sellers,” chaffering over beads and mother-of-pearl crosses, and enter the precincts of the Haram-esh-Sherif—“the noble sanctuary.” How silent and still! It is like turning into the Temple from the Strand. One thinks of cathedral closes and college gardens; battlemented walls, green fields enamelled with spring flowers, dark and sombre cypresses, fountains, marble pavements and cupolas, Saracenic screens and colonnades, form a vision of beauty such as the eye can rarely gaze upon: and yet the setting seems almost unworthy of the gem—the so-called Mosque of Omar, whose noble Saracenic dome, so peacefully rising into the still air, carries one back to Cairo and the tombs of the Memlook kings. Pleasing as this splendid

Mosque is to the eye, it more deeply moves the heart. What is the gem to the precious relic for which it is cut and framed, and which so strangely stirs up the memories of the past? As you enter the Kubbet-es-Sukhrah, and gaze upon the long ridge of natural rock projecting from the pavement, how vividly it recalls Abraham and Isaac, Araunah and David, Solomon and "David's greater son." Controversy is forgotten in the feelings of the hour. Whether this rock be the "unhewn stone" of the altar, or the cave beneath the sepulchre of Jesus, it matters not. If it be the altar, it speaks of His atonement; if the sepulchre, of His Priesthood (Heb. v. 5).

As we slowly walk along the sward to the Mosque of El-Aksa, and as the Temple seems to rise before the mind, the very presence of Islamism on every side helps one to realise that the noble building which once rose from this platform—place it where you will—was in all its grandeur but a "worldly sanctuary" and a "figure of the true." In these very courts were uttered the words, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. He spake of the temple of His body." The typical is a thing of the past, there is not "left here one stone upon another;" but the substance remains, and will remain for ever. The "Holy Place" of 3000 years wanes before the vision of the New Jerusalem. "I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (Rev. xxi. 22).

XLVII.

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after ; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple."
—PSALM xxvii. 4.

IT is very probable that the 27th Psalm was composed by David when banished from Jerusalem by the rebellion of Absalom. Whilst breathing a spirit of remarkable trust in Jehovah's care, the Psalmist expresses his yearning desire to enter once again "the house of the Lord." The comforts of home, the luxury of power, are swallowed up in this,—“one thing have I desired.” As a child he loved the Father's dwelling-place. “God dwells in the congregation of the righteous” (Ps. lxxxii. 1). In order to understand the force of the expression, “Beauty of the Lord,” we must remember that the tabernacle of Moses was then at Gibeon, where it remained until removed by Solomon to the temple (2. Chron. i. 3, 4), and that the ark alone was on Mount Zion. We are told that David “set the Ark of the Lord in the midst of the tabernacle that he had pitched for it ;” and then he “offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings

before the Lord " (2 Sam. vi. 17). The *propitiatory* was to David the "*beauty of the Lord.*" The mercy seat was a mirror in which he saw reflected the beauteous grace of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ. Each colour of the rainbow has its beauty; one colour may be sombre, another gay, but there is a special beauty which arises from the blended radiance of all, the combined harmony of the whole. To a spiritual perception each attribute of God has its beauty. The believer loves God's justice and holiness as well as His goodness and mercy; but it is in the harmony of all God's attributes, the blending of mercy and justice, of holiness and love, of grace and truth, as seen in the Cross of Christ, that the pardoned sinner beholds the "Beauty of the Lord;" for there "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." "Out of Zion (*i.e.*, from the propitiatory), the *perfection of beauty*, God hath shined" (Ps. l. 2).

What, my reader, are your feelings with reference to the ordinances of the sanctuary? The ark was but an outward symbol, and yet it was no silent preacher; it had a voice which reached the heart of David. If you have realised your guilt, how deeply you will love the place where the Gospel is proclaimed, where are unfolded the sweet mysteries of salvation, and where you celebrate a dying Saviour's love! Your fervent desire will be to "dwell in the house of the Lord," that you may behold His "beauty."

The Jewish Rabbis say that when Joseph

collected corn in the years of plenty and filled the storehouses with grain, he cast all the chaff into the river Nile, that the people dwelling on the banks might be cheered when they saw these signs of plenty, and that they might say, "What an abundance of corn must there be in the treasury of Joseph!" The members of Christ's kingdom on earth love the "House of the Lord." They love to dwell by the river of His ordinances, for there Jesus sends down signs and tokens which cheer their hearts, and tell them that in His presence is fulness of joy, and at His "right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Such can understand the feeling of David when he wrote, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple."

XLVIII.

"Able to save . . . to the uttermost."—HEBREWS vii. 25.

THE first verse of the 3rd chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews is really the text of which the remainder of the Epistle is the sermon. The writer divides his subject into two heads. He asks the Hebrew converts to consider Christ: 1st, as the antitype of Moses, "the Apostle," the "sent one" of God (Exodus iii. 10-15; St John xx. 21). 2d, As the antitype of Aaron, the High Priest.

The first point occupies the whole of the 3d chapter, and the first 13 verses of the 4th. With the 14th verse of the 4th chapter commences the consideration of the priesthood of Jesus. The introduction of the priesthood of Melchisedec (v. 6-10, vi. 20, vii. 1, &c.), whilst speaking of the typical character of the Aaronic priesthood, at first sight seems somewhat to confuse the argument, but a moment's consideration of the typology of the Old Testament removes any such thought. No single emblem or figure can represent the fulness of Christ in His person, His work, and His offices; hence a system of dualism pervades the types, as in

the case of the "two birds" connected with the cleansing of the leper, and the "two kids of the goats" connected with the Day of Atonement.

Just as through the two lenses of the stereoscope, the one object comes out more distinctly, so through the two typical priesthoods, the one of Aaron, and the other of Melchisedec, the Priesthood of Jesus is seen to stand out more clearly and more fully. What the one lacked the other supplied. The two points in which Melchisedec typified Christ were (1.), that he was a Royal Priest. Such was Christ; He sprung out of Judah, the royal tribe; in Him the prophecy of Zechariah was fulfilled, "He shall be a priest upon His throne" (vi. 13). On this I must not dwell. (2.) That he was the only priest of his order of whom we have any record. The grand imperfection of the Aaronic priesthood was that it was one of succession. Aaron died, Eleazar died, Jehoiada died, &c. "They truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death" (v. 23).

How could a dying priesthood typify the ever-living priest Christ Jesus?

By divine arrangement a priest was chosen whose name was Melchisedec. We are not told who was his predecessor, nor are we told the name of his successor. He stands out on the page of Inspiration the one and only priest of his line, that he might prefigure the "great High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus," who stands alone in His office and order, and will stand alone throughout

eternity,—“A priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

From this fact the apostle draws a thought of great comfort. “Wherefore He is able also to *save* them *to the uttermost* that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” It is a blessed privilege for the minister of the gospel to proclaim to the vilest sinner the ability of Jesus to save. No verse is more frequently quoted than the one before us as a proof of Christ’s saving powers. But to limit the text to such an application is entirely to misunderstand the argument of the apostle, which is, that Christ’s continual intercession is adapted to the continual need of His people. The deduction to be drawn from the untransmittable nature of Christ’s priesthood is that He is able to save entirely and completely, that He is able to save *to the very end*. Let me illustrate the point. Never shall I forget the recorded experience of a pervert from the Church of England to that of Rome, who, for the first time, went to confession. The shame and the anguish of opening out the most secret thoughts to a fellow-man were intense. Supposing that after a few years the priest died, again would that person have to lacerate every feeling by opening out his mind afresh to a stranger. Not so with the penitent who has confessed his sins to Jesus, the true and only Priest who is alone able to give absolution.

“He never dies!—He is able to save *evermore*, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

Let us go to the deathbed of some departing saint. You ask, "Is Christ with you now?" The dying one answers, "Yes, oh! yes." By and by the dying one is too feeble even to speak. Perhaps again you say, "Is Jesus with you still?" The motion of the hand, or the lips, or the smile on the face, answer, "Yes;" and when death has settled on the brow and you feel that you stand at the entrance of the dark valley, through which the soul is now passing, One is still near Whose rod and Whose staff support and comfort; He fulfils His promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." "Wherefore He is able also to save them *to the very end* who come to God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

XLIX.

"But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?"—JOB xxx. 10.

THERE are times when words of Sacred Writ, which have been long familiar to the mind, seem to bear fresh emphasis when underlined, so to speak, by some incident which, through the powers of association, causes them to stand out in a clearer and a distincter light.

On my return from a second visit to Palestine, after the manner of most travellers to the East, I stayed for a few days at Athens. My hotel was in the public square, at the head of which stands the king's palace, with its adjoining gardens. During the day I had heard the notes of a nightingale; but so interested was I in the various sights of the city that I was only conscious of the song. After a long day's work I retired to rest, but not to sleep. A day of the keenest interest was anything but conducive to repose. Suddenly I heard the rich warbling notes of a nightingale. The response was soon taken up by its fellows until the garden seemed vocal with melody.

Those who are accustomed to the nightingale's

song can hardly imagine the pleasure with which one who has always lived in cities and towns listened to the music, unless like good old Izaak Walton their love for nature never grows cold. I cannot keep back his words:—"He that at midnight, when the weary labourer sleeps, should hear, as I have often done, the clear airs, the sweet descants, the natural rising and falling, the doubling and redoubling of the nightingale's voice, might well be lifted above earth, and say, Lord, what music hast Thou provided for the saints in heaven, when Thou affordest bad men such music upon earth."

The thought suggested to my mind as I listened to the exquisite minstrelsy, was, "How is it that the bird which sings the sweetest, for the most part sings in the night?" To which the answer came, "God will not waste His gifts even of nature; and the bird that sings the sweetest shall sing when the ear of man is most attentive to hear amid the silence of the night."

There are promises in the Bible which ought, to the ear of faith, to be as songs at all times. But there are others, and those among the most precious, which are never understood until they are heard in the night of sorrow. These promises we may have noted with some pleasure in the daytime of prosperity, amid the din and distraction of our daily life; but it is in the quiet nighttime of affliction, in the solitude of the sick chamber, or in the sacred loneliness of bereave-

ment, that their heavenly music is heard with unmingled thankfulness and joy. It is at such times, when the ear of faith is most attentive to hear, that God brings out His sweetest notes of comfort; so that with Job the delighted listener exclaims, "Who giveth songs in the night."

L

"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."

—ISA. xliii. 2.

THE direct reference of this gracious promise is doubtless to the position of the Jews in Babylon, and the sufferings which they were undergoing in the land of their captivity. As Bishop Wordsworth well remarks:—"The mighty power of Assyria, to which the prophet refers, had been already compared to a great flood of water, threatening to overwhelm everything" (xvii. 12). The words of this promise would recall to their minds the past history of Israel and the previous outgoings of Jehovah's love. They would remember the passage of the Red Sea, and of the Jordan, through which, although the river was at the flood, Israel had entered into their promised rest.

Water is often used in Scripture as an emblem of calamity. "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me" (Ps. lxi. 1, 2). But amidst every calamity which

may befall a true child of God, Jehovah is ever fulfilling the promise before us. The experience of the believer in every age is that of the Psalmist: "We went through fire and through water: but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place" (Ps. lxi. 12).

The words of Isaiah were vividly brought before me by an incident which occurred as I stood on the east bank of the Jordan, near the ford which lies just below its confluence with the Jabbok. In the summer the river is easily forded by the sheep as they follow the shepherd, who knows the shallowest line of passage; but it was spring-time, and the current was deep and strong. A shepherd, who was about to have his sheep taken across by the ferry-boat, wished first of all to wash them in the river. He entered the stream until the waters reached above his knees, and then turning round, he stood and called a sheep by name. The poor creature descended the bank, and as it timidly looked at the stream, drew back. Still he called, and it tremblingly entered. After wading a short distance, the sheep stood still. Again he called,—again the sheep advanced. But just as it drew near to the shepherd, the current proved too strong, and it would have certainly been carried away had not the shepherd stretched out his long stalwart arm and drawn it to himself, when he safely held it whilst he washed its fleece.

The "Good Shepherd" never calls His sheep

into any stream of sorrow which He has not first waded, and in which He Himself does not stand. The waters of a believer's purification may sometimes seem to him overwhelmingly deep; but he may rest assured that the promise of a covenant-keeping God will stand unchanged: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."

LI.

“And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.”—*MATT. xxv. 32.*

IN a comment which I read years ago on this passage, I was told by the writer that it was the custom of Eastern shepherds at the close of the day to separate the sheep from the goats. On my first visit to the East, seven years ago, I naturally looked out for every illustration of the Book in the land itself. I was much surprised and disappointed to gain no light on the illustration used by our Lord in the passage which we are considering. In Egypt and in Syria, over and over again I saw sheep and goats folded together for the night, and in no instance did I see them separated. I asked a friend who had lived for years in the East if he had ever seen a shepherd at night-time divide his sheep from the goats. He said, No!

Whilst travelling in Egypt in the spring of 1873, I had the pleasure of meeting Dr Manning of the Tract Society, and the well-known author of “Italian Pictures” and other works of a like

character. When he told me that the object of his visit was to collect materials for a book on Palestine, I mentioned to him the point before us, and he promised to "look out," as well as to make inquiries.

We met again after some weeks at Beyrout, when I was delighted to find that he had solved the difficulty. A shepherd at Nazareth told him that the division is not made at night when the flocks are folded, but in the *morning* when they go out to pasture. The goats can be driven more quickly than sheep. Moreover, goats can find pasture where sheep could not possibly feed.

Thankful was I for the words which solved a difficulty which had been created in my mind by false information on the habits of an Eastern shepherd. Not only the illustration used as to the fact of separation, but as to the time when the division takes place, was most appropriate to the occasion. The goats and sheep are folded together in the dispensation which our Lord himself compares to the night; but in the morning of the everlasting day which shall ere long dawn on the Church, when "the Dayspring from on high shall visit us," and the "Son of Man shall come in His glory," and when "all nations shall be gathered before Him,"—then "He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats."

LII.

“And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching-place for flocks; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.”—EZEKIEL xxv. 5.

RABBAH, the chief city of the Ammonites, and the one great stronghold of the nation, lay just outside the borders of Gilead. There is one important incident in its history which is easily understood as the traveller reads the sacred record in Rabbah itself. I refer to its siege by Joab.

We read (2 Sam. xi.) that “David sent Joab, and his servants, and all Israel with him, and they destroyed the children of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.” The time of the siege was the season of David’s fearful fall. David was living in sin with Bathsheba whilst her husband Uriah was fighting the king’s battles before Rabbah, and where eventually he was smitten and died “in the forefront of the hottest battle.” As the reader follows the narrative, he will see an apparent contradiction: “And Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city.” After this we read that Joab sent messengers to

David to bring additional forces : " Lest I take the city, and it be called after my name."

The explanation is simple enough. Like Jerusalem, which had a " lower city," and an " upper " one, its citadel—" the stronghold of Zion," so was it at Ammon. The city taken by Joab was the one in the valley standing at the confluence of two streams ; hence its name, " the city of waters." At the north side of this lower town there rises an abrupt triangular rock ; on its summit was the citadel. Joab, with a generous desire for his master's glory, wished that the upper city or stronghold should be taken by David himself : " And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it."

In the spring of 1873, whilst travelling on the east of the Jordan, I encamped at Rabbah, and was deeply impressed by the literal fulfilment of prophecy so sensibly brought before me. In the early part of the day we had visited the remarkable Jewish ruins at Arak el Emir. I had left a valley whose stream was thickly fringed with numberless oleanders, had passed through an oak forest amid the richest vegetation, and then had come upon a dreary contrast whilst we rode over a bleak stony upland, a fit preparation for the scene of utter desolation which awaited me amid the ruins of Rabbah. The only thing which spoke of life were a few storks which stood in the pellucid stream which

flowed through the valley, and which flew away at our approach. The skeleton of a camel which I passed in the way seemed the more vividly to bring before me the only words which rose to my mind as I surveyed the solitude of the scene—"The valley of the shadow of death." In no part of Syria are the ruins more extensive, although almost entirely those of the more modern city of Philadelphia. I was surrounded by the remains of bastions and theatres, temples and churches, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and *it shall be a desolate heap*" (Jer. xlix. 2).

The words, however, of the text I have chosen, were the most vividly brought before me. The stench of our camping ground was almost intolerable. The Bedawin bring their flocks and herds here in thousands to water them at the stream, and during the winter months to shelter their camels and sheep in the ruins of the valley. It was impossible to enter some of the more perfect buildings. In the early morning, whilst wandering over the acropolis, I saw a shepherd remove a stone from the door of one of the chambers attached to the Byzantine church, out of which came a flock of sheep. The prophecy of Ezekiel has been fulfilled to the letter: "I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching-place for flocks; and ye shall know that I am the Lord."

LIII.

"The shadow of death."—Ps. xxiii. 4.

THE twenty-third Psalm ought always to be read in the light of the twenty-second. In the first of these two Psalms we have the Shepherd passing through the dark valley of the shadow of death alone, and overcoming every foe, that He might afterwards guide His flock safely through. If Jesus had not said, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" David had not sung, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

The "shadow of death" is a figurative expression for any deep sorrow or trial. It is used by Jeremiah when he is foretelling the sore judgments of God upon the "pride of Judah." "Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness" (xiii. 10). The expression is used once again by the same writer in the second chapter of his prophecy and sixth verse, where we gain an interesting commentary upon its use by

David. He is describing the journeyings of Israel through the desert of Sinai, the terrible desolation of some parts of the pilgrimage, the bare crags and the sterile, arid waste, so void of life that it seemed as if death had cast its shadow upon the scene. "Neither said they, Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and pits, through a land of drought and of the *shadow of death*, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?"

The Shepherd of Israel who at one time led his flock to the palm grove of Elim, at another led them through the land of "the shadow of death." David in the Psalm before us, in the fulness of his faith, sings not only of his rest and refreshment "in the green pastures" and "beside the still waters," but also of his confidence when passing through the barren waste, where no verdure meets the eye, and where no trace of water is to be seen: even "in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." I see Thy rod and Thy staff on before. Where Thou guidest I will gladly follow. With Thee the wilderness becomes to me a garden and the desert blossoms as the rose.

Doubtless David remembered such a dark valley in the history of Jacob, and how the night of loneliness and sorrow at Bethel was changed into a season of joy and gladness; for did not the

Great Shepherd say, "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest" ?

As this word "shadow of death," or "death-shade" is used by Job of Hades (x. 21, 22), let us consider the verse as applicable to death. The illustration of David seems to be somewhat as follows. The shadows of night are gathering round, and the shepherd walking before his sheep, crook and staff in hand, leads his flock toward the fold. The pastures are left behind. The way lies through a desolate wady or ravine. The precipitous rocks on each side casting their shadows, deepen the gloom of approaching night. The cry of the wild beast is heard. The poor sheep trembles with fear. The shepherd, who instinctively knows the feeling of the timid creature behind, turns round and rests the end of his "staff" which has so often defended, or the "rod" or "crook" which has always so safely guided, upon the back of the sheep. All fear is gone. The shepherd is near. The valley is soon passed, and ere long the sheep is safely within the fold.

May you and I, dear reader, have this confidence from a Saviour's presence in the hour of death. The very word "shadow" of necessity implies the presence of light. An able expositor* of the Psalms well says, "Death stands by the side of the highway on which we have to travel,

* The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon has laid the whole Church of Christ under obligation by his invaluable Commentary on the Psalms. "The Treasury of David."

and the light of heaven shining upon him throws a shadow across our path ; let us then rejoice that there is a light beyond. Nobody is afraid of a shadow. The shadow of a dog cannot bite ; the shadow of a sword cannot kill ; the shadow of death cannot destroy." "The sting of death is sin ; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

LIV.

"The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever. The Lord will give strength unto His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace."—PSALM xxix. 10, 11.

IF the eighth Psalm be the song of the starlit night, if the nineteenth be the hymn of the early dawn, the twenty-ninth is the ode of the storm and tempest.

The Psalmist follows the course of the thunder-storm, as he often must have witnessed it from the hills of Judah. He sees its rise upon the waters of the Mediterranean. "The Lord is upon many waters." "The voice of the Lord" is heard in the distant thunder, "powerful" and "full of majesty." Sweeping eastward, the tempest now bursts upon the heights of Lebanon; the mighty limbs of the cedar are torn asunder. The very mountains seem to shake and tremble beneath its power. "Lebanon and Sirion (Hermon) skip like young buffaloes." "The force and fire of the poet's genius kindles and glows and sweeps along with all the freedom and majesty of the storm," as he depicts the lurid gleam of the forked lightning. "The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire." We almost

see the livid flame as it discloses the depths of the dark thunder-clouds. Now the storm rolls southwards, and "the voice of the Lord," heard on the mountains, thunders over the vast and silent desert of Kadesh (the wilderness of Zin) In the next strophe David sings of the "rain-torrents" which succeed the storm. The flood-gates of heaven have burst. From every mountain, hill, and slope, the streams descend into the valleys, each wady adds force to the current, until the irresistible "flood" carries destruction and desolation in its course. Now the tempest is hushed, and all nature is bathed in the sunshine of peace.

Ere the Psalmist closes, he reminds us that He who ruled the storm in its wildest uproar, and stilled it by His word, He who gave the storm its strength and then hushed it to a calm, is the same Jehovah who will give "strength to His people," and who "will bless His people with peace." "Jehovah is the God of Israel. It was He who, when the storm waxed strong, gave it its strength; it was He who, when it was hushed, spread over earth and sea and sky the sweet Sabbath stillness of peace. And He whose almighty power was seen in the march of the tempest, whose voice was heard in its wildest uproar, and whose word stilled its fiercest war, shall He not give both strength and peace? Yea Jehovah, who is strong and mighty, will give His own strength to His people; and He who is the Prince

of Peace will bless His people with peace. "Thus the Psalm begins, as Delitzsch says, with a *Gloria in excelsis* and ends with a *Pax in terris*" (Perowne).

It was my lot, seven years ago, to witness the effects of a storm such as that so nobly pictured by the Psalmist of Israel. Such a series of storms had not been known in Palestine for forty years. At the north end of the shore of St George's Bay, a streamlet had become a mighty torrent. As "the rain descended, the floods came," and swept away the foundations of a house; the large hewn stones lay in heaps. "A foolish man" had "built his house upon the sand," and "great was the fall of it." The Damour was impassable. In more than one place I saw the ruins of bridges which had been swept away. The Kishon, which in summer at its mouth barely covers the fetlocks of your horse, was a deep and turbid torrent. If we had ventured to swim across on horseback, like those of whom Deborah sang, we should have been swept away by the river of Kishon.

I have given these personal details to add reality to the word "flood" or "rain-torrent" of our text, and that we may better glean the great lesson of comfort which David draws from his devout contemplation of God's power in the kingdom of nature.

The exhibition of God's power in the kingdom of nature is but a picture of His sovereignty in the kingdoms of providence and grace.

(1.) In the kingdom of providence.

The "flood" described by the Psalmist comes so suddenly, and often so unexpectedly, that it seems beyond all control. We recognise God's guiding hand in the regular and constant forces of nature, but are apt to forget that He who "guides the stars in their courses" has absolute power over the storm and tempest. The waters are but His chariot; in their wildest moments He rules supreme, He sits as a King to rule and reign. The word "flood" in this Psalm is the one used to describe the Deluge. In Genesis it occurs twelve times, but nowhere else in the Bible, save in this place.

Do you not already see the thought of the Psalmist? In the terrible catastrophe which destroyed the ungodly, God remembered Noah and his family; He provided for their safety, Jehovah calmly sat upon the wild waste of waters. Its billows were harmless to His people; and in His own time "the fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained." Have trials come upon you like a "flood," sudden bereavements, unexpected losses, grievous temptations? The Lord's strength was yours. He sat upon the waters. He curbed their power at His will. He stayed their force. You were not tempted more than you were able to bear. In His own time He restrained the rain. The clouds departed, the sun shone, peace stole into your soul. He

gave you strength to bear ; and after it was borne, He blessed you with peace. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee ; because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever ; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

(2.) In the kingdom of grace.

I do not doubt but that in the whole Psalm there is a reference to the law and the gospel, and that he who sees in it God's sovereign power and love interprets it aright. As Bishop Wordsworth remarks : "In the Hebrew ritual, this Psalm is connected with the Feast of Pentecost, when the law was given amid manifestations of Divine glory and majesty on Mount Sinai."

Has any reader of this paper lately experienced the storm and tempest ? Have you stood at the foot of Sinai and heard "the voice of the Lord" speaking with exceeding power ? Has the lightning gleam of His omniscient eye laid bare the depths of your soul ? Your cry is, "Save me, O God ; for the waters are come in unto my soul ; I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." Behold His sovereign grace. He has provided a Substitute ; upon Him the bolt of the Divine wrath has fallen ; the force of the thunder-cloud is expended, the sky is clear, the sun shines, and thou too shalt have peace.

But you say, I believe that God is reconciled to me, but yet I have not peace. Immediately after the storm described by David, though there was

not a cloud in the sky, yet the waters of the great sea were still troubled; but gradually they subsided, and on the morrow their unrippled surface reflected the perfect calm of the heaven above. Look upward to the face of a reconciled Father, and as you gaze your own heart will soon reflect the peace of heaven above. "The Lord will give strength unto His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace."

LV.

"I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh; for the shouting for thy summer fruits, and for thy harvest, is fallen. And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting: the treaders shall tread out no wine in their presses; I have made their vintage-shouting to cease."—
Isa. xvi. 9, 10.

A SUNDAY spent beside the fountain of Heshbon stands out among many happy memories of my second visit to the land of the Bible.

On the previous afternoon it had been my great privilege to gaze on the marvellous panorama which God showed to His servant Moses from the "mountain of Nebo," "the top of Pisgah," before He summoned him to His more immediate presence. After our morning service I had loitered, book in hand, by the banks of the stream which would have led me, had I followed its course, into the plain of Abel-Shittim (the meadow of acacias) in the Jordan valley beneath. Whilst turning to passage after passage of Scripture connected with the past associations of the district, it suddenly occurred to me that the ruins of the

city of Heshbon were quite within a Sabbath walk.

Starting with my friend Burton and an Arab of the Adwân tribe in whose domain we were then sojourning, we descended the wady; and then leaving the stream, we struck up a ravine bearing to the south. I found it no light task to climb the rocky gorge; but ere long we reached the summit and stood on the border of that vast rolling table-land—the Belka—the rich pasture lands where Reuben “abode among the sheepfolds to hear the bleatings of the flocks.” A mound, nearly a mile ahead, covered with ruins, was the site of the city where once dwelt Sihon, the king of the Amorites. Of its history I must not speak; but ruins almost a mile in circuit, stones hewn for Jewish, Roman, and Islam masters, speak of the importance of the site as commanding so vast and rich a possession as the fruitful uplands where the innumerable flocks and herds of Mesha, king of Moab, once found their pasture.

The shadows of night were gathering fast around us. I could only just discern, two miles to the north, a hill with a solitary column on its summit, like a sentinel standing guard over the deserted plain. I was looking at El A'al, the Elealeh of the passage which heads this paper.

One memorial of the past was deeply interesting. My friend had discerned to the south-east of the hill the remains of the reservoir, or tank, which, when full of water, and glistening

beneath the rays of an Eastern sun, had doubtless suggested to Solomon one of the similes in his exquisite allegory. Describing his bride, he says, "Thine eyes are like the fish-pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim" (vii. 4). Bath-rabbim means the "daughter of multitudes." No trace of the gate is left, and the "place of crowds" is a scene of utter desolation. The increasing darkness seemed to heighten the feeling of intense solitude. There was no tree or shrub to speak of life; no sound of bird or beast. I could only linger for a moment to think of the past, of the busy city in the midst of its fertile suburbs, of the songs of the vintage, of the sounds of joy and gladness in the bounteous field, of the shoutings of the treaders in the wine-presses; but now "Moab is laid waste and brought to silence." Her possessions were to be ravaged. The prophet, foretelling the destruction of Moab, says, "Heshbon shall cry and Elealeh; their voice shall be heard unto Jahaz," *i.e.*, their cry of grief shall be so loud as to reach to Jahaz on the border of the Eastern desert. As the Spirit of God set vividly before the eyes of the prophet the fearful doom of Heshbon, he enters into their coming sorrows, and cries, "I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon" (Isa. xvi. 9). Who can fail to think of Him who, in His Divine compassion, in like manner wept over Jerusalem as He thought of its final overthrow!

As we descended to the Wady Heshbân, the stars came out one by one, and the moon's rays now and again rested with a silvery light on rock and crag. The screech of an owl far away was the only sound to break the stillness of the night. How different the scene when the valley below resounded with the tramp of the men of Israel, and with the joyful songs of women and children, as they descended into the plain, and thought of their speedy entrance into the Promised Land!

LVI.

"Our fathers have sinned, and are not ; and we have borne their iniquities."—*LAM. v. 7.*

NO traveller thinks of leaving Jerusalem without a visit to the "Jews' Wailing Place," which lies at the south part of the western wall of the haram, outside the mosque and yet inside the city, not far from Robinson's arch. Here are the huge bevelled stones of the old temple wall, which the poor outcasts of Israel have for centuries been permitted to bathe with their tears.

Prepared as I was for a mere form, I was more moved than I care to express by the scene which awaited me. As it was not Friday, the ordinary day of wailing, the place of the resident Jews who visit these hallowed stones week by week was for the most part occupied by strangers—Eastern pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem for the Holy Week. Such a scene of genuine sorrow I have rarely witnessed. True, there was the same rabbi, whom we had seen in the synagogue of the Chasidim a day or two before, rocking his body more violently than ever, whilst he chanted a Psalm in tones which perhaps years

before had been expressive of sorrow, but which were now but "custom without truth." There, too, by his side was his son, a handsome young lad of thirteen or fourteen, with a fur cap, and a long dark ringlet falling down each cheek, with eyes everywhere but on his book until he saw our approach, and then, as in the synagogue when strange gazes were upon him, a sanctimonious look stole over his face painful to behold; he broke forth into the wailing tone of his father and pretended to wipe away imaginary tears.

But this was but a parody of the scene around us. Again and again the voices of men and women were choked in sobs while they chanted in a minor key, which even whilst I write vibrates on my ear, the words of the seventy-ninth Psalm: "O God, the heathen are come into Thine inheritance; Thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. How long, O Lord? Wilt Thou be angry for ever? Shall Thy jealousy burn like fire?"

A group of three aged women, who sat on the pavement and wept as they listened to the reading of a friend, and who had travelled far to kiss the sacred stones before they died, touched my heart with inexpressible sadness. The 137th Psalm and the Book of Lamentations, with their words of unrivalled pathos, seem now to me inseparably connected with the scene at the "Jews' Wailing

Place," and I recall the words, "Our fathers have sinned and are not; and we have borne their iniquities."

Dear reader, the Jew is still "beloved for the Father's sake." May our resolve be, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake will I not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

LVII.

"A garden inclosed."—SONG OF SOLOMON iv. 12.

THE Church is the Lord's Paradise or Garden. Many and precious are the thoughts which lie beneath the metaphor. A garden speaks of care and culture, of digging and dunging, of planting and pruning, of fragrance and fruitfulness. Some of these points are brought out in the 13th and 14th verses of this chapter. But it is to the expression "inclosed," I now ask your attention.

In the East, gardens are always inclosed, as for the most part with us; sometimes with a fence of canes or reeds, sometimes with a "hedge of thorns" or of cactus, and often with a high wall of hard mud or of stones, as is the case with the traditional "Garden of Gethsemane" at the foot of the Mount of Olives. The wise man when describing the garden of the slothful man, says, "The stone wall thereof was broken down." The Jews were celebrated for their gardens, for their culture of flowers, and of aromatic shrubs, for their herbs, and for their fruit-trees. Pliny says, "Syria is very rich in gardens," and then

tells us that this circumstance gave rise to a Greek proverb.

We can imagine what special care would be bestowed on a royal garden! Many writers imagine that the garden described by Solomon in the Book of Canticles was "the king's garden" mentioned in 2 Kings xxv. 4, Neh. iii. 15, Jer. xxxix. 4, and lii. 7, which was situated near the "Pool of Siloah," at the mouth of the Tyropean valley, and at the junction of the valleys of Ben Hinnom and Jehoshaphat. I believe, however, that tradition in this instance is correct, and that the royal garden of the Song of Solomon lay in the Wady Urtas near Bethlehem. It is supposed by the monks that the very name Urtas is a corruption of *hortus*, and that without doubt the "*hortus clausus*," or "garden inclosed," lay in this valley. The noble pools still remain which were used by Solomon "to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees" (Eccles. ii. 6). We have here, too, a "fountain sealed."

As I write of this garden, there comes vividly to my mind a morning of a bright spring day spent in this valley, and a rest in the garden of good old Mashullam, beneath the shade of its fruit-trees, in the same spot where Solomon loved to wander with his bride, and where each flower and fruitful tree suggested some simile of her perfection and beauty. Van de Velde thinks that not merely the valley but the hills and slopes around were covered with trees and plants, "as

is shown by the names that they still bear; as 'Peach Hill,' 'Nut Vale' (Song of Sol. vi. 11), 'Fig Vale' (ii. 13), &c."

But I must not be attracted by my subject to forget the special point in connection with the king's garden which is brought before us in the short sentence at the head of this paper, viz., that it was "a garden inclosed." It was not a garden into which every passer by might enter, but one kept solely for the king's use and pleasure. The Church belongs absolutely to Christ, and hence in the 16th verse the Church—the Bride—is represented as asking the heavenly Bridegroom to "come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruit." The word "inclosed" implies not only ownership but also privacy. In the East, the garden is the possessor's special place of retirement. The believer's inmost heart is like the Holy of holies, into which none but the high priest must enter. It is a "fountain sealed" to all but the king; it is a "garden inclosed"—separated and set apart for the Lord's service and glory, and wherein He loves to dwell.

Let us briefly notice three ways in which the Church is as "a garden inclosed."

1. By God's electing love.

I have often seen gardens in the East hedged in from the desert. All around is an arid waste of sand; the only sign of life some stunted nubk or thorn. The garden has been taken in, planted, and carefully watered from a well in its midst or

by a conduit from some distant spring. God's view of man universally, in his natural state, is that his heart is as a desert waste, but by His electing love and redeeming grace He has separated a people. From all eternity has He marked out for Himself "a garden inclosed." "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in God" (Eph. i. 4).

"We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made precious ground;
A little spot inclosed by grace
Out of the world's wide wilderness."

2. By God's sanctifying grace.

The work of the Holy Spirit is commensurate with the Father's eternal plan and measurement. There is no single foot separated by the one in design which is not "inclosed" by the other in fact. The doctrines of election and sanctification are always placed side by side in the inspired page. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 2). Israel of old was "a garden inclosed" from the wilderness of the Gentiles, fenced in by the wall of circumcision; a wall created by God himself as a barrier between it and the world, for Israel was to be set apart as a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The true Israel of God are "chosen out of the world" (John xv. 16) to be a "royal priesthood, a holy

nation, a peculiar people" (1 Pet. ii. 9); and they have "the circumcision" of the heart "in the spirit, and not in the letter" (Rom. ii. 28, 29).

Never was there a time when the Church more needed that the hedge of separation between herself and the world should be kept distinct. Oh that the wall in our hearts were higher, and that the door were doubly locked against sin and the world! The king's garden must not have a fence so low that you can hardly see where it merges into the wilderness. "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. xii. 2). "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Cor. vi. 17). Remember that the Church is to be "a garden inclosed."

3. By God's providential care.

In all ages God's all-watchful eye and His all-powerful arm have encompassed His Church. He has guarded His people in the dark night of their persecution and sorrow as well as in the bright day of their prosperity. "A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isa. xxvii. 2, 3). In the hour of the Church's seeming weakness and the soul's desponding moments, unseen to mortal eyes,

invisible cohorts of angels and horses of fire have inclosed them in. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about His people." The garden has been protected by a hedge through which no wild boar has broken, by a "wall of fire" through which the great "roaring lion" has never ventured to pass.

We leave the simile before us with the solemn thought that if we do not live up to our privileges, if we bring forth "wild grapes," God will deal with us as with His chosen people of old: "Now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it" (Isa. v. 5, 6). Terrible is the judgment upon souls that have despised privileges and neglected opportunities.

LVIII.

"My spouse, my sister."—SONG OF SOLOMON iv. 12.

IT is a well-known saying of Jerome, that "Solomon the peaceable, the loved of the Lord, corrects human manners in the Proverbs, expounds nature in Ecclesiastes, and unites Christ and the Church in the Canticles." True it is that this union is represented allegorically, "for the exercise of the seeker and the delight of the finder;" but he who "compares spiritual things with spiritual," will not be slow to read the saying aright. He sees beneath the veil of types and symbols the foreshadowings of incarnate love—the marriage of Christ and His Church—the glories of the Bridegroom, and the graces and privileges of the Bride. Solomon in this book, like Moses, putting a veil before his face, hides beneath the veil of earthly love "the mystical union that is betwixt the Redeemer and His redeemed," "because at that time," to use the words of Bernard, "there were few or none that could gaze upon such glories." Let us read this most precious portion of the inspired record with the words of

Paul in our minds: "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and His Church," and we shall find that the Book of Canticles, like every other part of Holy Scripture, "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

In the sentence before us, we have the heavenly Bridegroom addressing the Church by two endearing titles, each of which represents a distinct relationship. The one a connection of affinity or of marriage; the other a connection of consanguinity or of blood. Under these two emblems we have the great and inseparable doctrines of justification and sanctification: "Whom He justified, them He also glorified, and," as a necessary sequence, "them He also sanctified;" for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

(1.) "My spouse."

The intimate union that exists between Christ and the Church is represented by many figures. Is the Church compared to a temple? Christ is the foundation. Is the Church symbolised by a vine? Christ is the root out of which the branches grow. Is the Church represented under the simile of the human body? Christ is the head. But no figure stands out with such frequency, or conveys such an idea of mutual union and love, as that of marriage. It is the one chief emblem in revelation which serves as an

exposition of Divine love. It meets us in the primeval union in the garden of paradise; it pervades history, psalm, and prophecy, and only disappears when revelation itself is ended in the vision of the Church's glory—when “the holy city, New Jerusalem,” comes “down from God out of heaven as a bride adorned for her husband” —when “the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.”

Space only allows me to note one feature of the marriage union, which has its counterpart in the union which exists between the believer and Jesus. The wife shares her husband's position, whilst he is responsible for her every obligation. If the bride has debts, by marriage they become his. If after marriage debt is contracted, the law overlooks the wife, and refers to the husband. The soul united to Christ by faith has remission of all past obligation, every debt is paid by Him. “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.” The soul that loves her Lord the most, grieves most that she should so continually fall into fresh debt; but whilst weeping over her folly, she knows that her Lord has cancelled it, “blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against” her, taking “it out of the way, nailing it to His cross.”

But Christ not only meets the believer's obligations, but asks the believer to share His honours. “And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them.” We have most of us

probably read of the Emperor of Russia who married the daughter of a serf. We think of her winter palace, and her summer palace, of her jewels and retinue, but we are not surprised at these things—they befitted her position. That which does surprise us is, that an emperor should have condescended to woo a serf. What glory can be compared with the position to which the believer is raised by virtue of his union with Jesus! And yet it is not the consideration of his present privileges or his future glory which fills his heart with awe and wonder so much as the thought that the eternal Jehovah should have loved such a sinner; that when He saw the Church as an infant cast out naked and polluted, that then was “the time of love,” that then He covered her with the “brodered” robe of His own righteousness, and decked her with the jewels of His grace, so that the all-searching eye of the Father should see her perfect in His Son’s comeliness, and the Son should exclaim as He beholds with infinite delight the beauty of His bride, “Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee” (Song of Sol. iv. 7). As the believer thinks of this he sings—

“Oh, for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
Their Saviour’s praises speak.”

(2) My sister.

Christ took upon Him our nature, and became

our brother, that He might become the Church's Husband; but the Church becomes His wife, that she may be a partaker of His nature, and so become His sister. She is born from above; "for as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The Church's parentage is seen in a spiritual likeness to her Lord. The brother's lineaments are reflected in his sister's face. A statement of St Paul's in reference to his fitness as an apostle illustrates the sentence before us: "My spouse, my sister." He says, "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife;" *i.e.*, a wife who is a "sister in the Lord," one who is likeminded with her husband. The believer can rejoice that there is "now no condemnation" by reason of his union with Jesus, but he rejoices also that his nature is so changed, that he no longer walks "after the flesh but after the Spirit."

Our Lord Himself regarded His as a more close relationship than any merely natural tie: "Who-soever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother." I have known a wife catch the very tones of her husband's voice. Communion assimilates. The Church as she beholds "the glory of the Lord"—is "changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord." The one great desire of the believer is to have the same

mind which was in Christ Jesus. "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness." What a glorious hour when the robes of our sanctification shall be as white as the robes of our justification; when the heavenly Bridegroom, seeing His own image perfectly reflected in the face of His sister, His spouse, shall rest in His love, and joy over her with singing!

LIX.

“And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem, he took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city; and they did help him. So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water?”—2 CHRON. xxxii. 2-4.

THE subject of the water supply of ancient Jerusalem is one of much interest. It is a most remarkable fact that during all its sieges, with the exception of that of Antiochus, and that referred to by Ezekiel (iv. 16, 17), we never read of a scarcity of water. At the siege of Titus, when there must have been at least a million of people in the city, when thousands of Jews, as Josephus tells us, died daily from famine—“when the upper rooms were full of women and children dying of famine, and the young men wandered about the market places like shadows”—thirst seems to have been unknown. The quantity of water required for the wants of the city must have been enormous. The religion of Judaism was one of unceasing ablutions. “For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash

their hands oft, eat not, holding the traditions of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables." When we remember the quantity demanded for the Temple service, the various purifications, the immense amount required for the constant flushing away of the blood of the sacrifices, &c., &c., we naturally wonder, from this point of view, that the capital of the Jewish race was not founded in the plains irrigated by the waters of the Abana and Pharpar, or at Cæsarea Philippi, by the sources of the Jordan, rather than in a region of limestone hills where fountains are so rare. For this supply of water was brought from a distance by aqueducts. One which conveyed water from Solomon's pools at Etham, and which runs along the slopes of Zion, still supplies the wants of the city.

But for the most part, in ancient days as now, Jerusalem was dependent upon the "rain of heaven." "The winter rain was to the inhabitants of Jerusalem what the Nile was to the Egyptians." Dr Trail has well said, "In Jerusalem the collection and conservation of the rains of the winter months became at once the impulse of a religious necessity and the first law of the municipal economy of the state."

Every house had its cisterns, either built or excavated in the limestone rock. The dimensions

of these tanks are not to be measured by the ideas of an English householder, whose cistern can so easily be refilled. Dr Robinson tells us in his "Biblical Researches," that when he was in Jerusalem he lodged with a M. Lanneau, whose house possessed four cisterns, one of which was 30 feet long, 30 feet broad, and 20 feet deep. A house in modern Jerusalem, in this respect, would be an index of a house in the ancient city. Besides these private cisterns, there were huge tanks and reservoirs, to collect the rainfall of the valleys outside and inside the city. The cisterns under the Temple area afforded an almost inexhaustible supply. One of these, described in the Book of Ecclesiasticus as a "cistern to receive water, being in compass as the sea" (i. 3), and to which reference is made by Aristeas, the ambassador of Ptolemy Philadelphus, contains at least 1,000,000 gallons. I was able to explore this, as at the time of my visit the water was not more than up to my waist. Captain Warren found a tank under El-Aksa hold-700,000, and he computes that the cisterns under the Haram area hold at least 5,000,000 gallons of water. The unfailing water supply of Jerusalem has been noted by writers in every age. Strabo describes the city as a "rocky, well-inclosed fortress, within being well-watered, but without altogether dry." Tacitus speaks of it as "a fountain of perennial water, mountains hollowed out underneath, also fish-pools and cisterns; rain-water being preserved" (Hist. v. 12).

The reader will now, I think, be prepared to understand more clearly the passage at the head of this paper. It is evident that in such an arid region, and with such an inexhaustible supply of water inside the walls, the strength of the besieged would be to "sit still," if the fountains and cisterns outside could be covered and concealed. This is what Hezekiah did. He "stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, 'Why should the king of Assyria come, and find much water?'" The system of waterworks constructed by this monarch was on the greatest scale: "This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David" (2 Chron. xxxii. 30); "and the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and all his might, and how he made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the cistern, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah" (2 Kings xx. 20).

Much attention has been paid to the subject of the water supply of Jerusalem by the "Palestine Exploration Fund." The agents of this Society have laid the whole Church of Christ under the deepest obligation. A few shafts, if we were only permitted to sink them, might at any time unravel the whole network of conduits and pools. "Even now it is a noticeable fact that the three most profuse sources around the Temple enclosure yield water with the peculiar insipid and salt

taste of Siloah." The same chemical properties are found in other pools. We know that Siloam and the Fountain of the Virgin are connected. "The most probable inference from all this is, that the water in all comes from a common source" (Ritter, vol. iv., p. 95). It has been conjectured that the stream found at the bottom of the shaft sunk through the disused cistern beneath Wilson's Arch, and which I myself have distinctly heard flowing, "may be the upper stream of Gihon, diverted by King Hezekiah, and brought down through the midst of the city on the approach of the army of Sennacherib."*

I, for one, deeply regret that the Christian public has shown so little practical interest in the work of "Palestine Exploration." Everything which illustrates the Word of God, and the archives of His "peculiar people," is of the deepest value. Remember that the history of Jerusalem not merely forms in great measure the history of the Bible, "but the hills and the walls, and the sanctuary of Jerusalem, formed, as it were, the language in which the history of the Christian Church was written" (Thrupp's *Ancient Jerusalem*, Introduction, p. 2).

The springs and conduits of Jerusalem supplied some of the most exquisite imagery of the Bible. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy palace of the taber-

* Paper read by Mr Walter Morrison, M.P., at the Liverpool Church Congress. Authorised report, p. 454.

nacles of the Most High " (Ps. xli. 4). Ezekiel's vision (Ezek. xlvii.) of the waters coming "down from under the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar;" and the vision presented to the enraptured eyes of the exile of Patmos of the "water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb," will be understood with a clearer force as regards the beauty of the imagery, when we have a fuller and completer knowledge of the water-supply of the ancient city, and specially of the water-courses underneath and near the precincts of the Temple area.

LX.

"Asher continued on the sea-shore, and abode in his 'creeks.'"—
JUD. v. 17.

THE verse before us will for ever be associated in my mind with my first view of Immanuel's land. I had climbed the headlands of Ras-el-Abiad and Ras-en-Nakûrah, which with the intervening bay completely separate the plain of Phœnicia from the land of Israel. As I stood on the summit of Ras-en-Nakûrah, the Ladder of Tyre, and drank in the scene before me, I felt that Palestine was to be to me, with God's blessing, like the Palace Beautiful, in which as a pilgrim I was to learn many a sacred lesson, and with Prophets and Evangelists as guides to see "the rarities of the place," and "the records of the greatest antiquity."

Heavy showers had fallen during the morning, but just as I reached the top of the Pass the rain ceased and the sun broke out. My first view of the land was one not to be forgotten. Instead of the dark curtain which had so lately shrouded the sky, a few grey fleecy clouds, like wreaths of smoke, floated here and there, as if to relieve the

monotony of the azure vault above. To the right was the boundless Mediterranean, its blue waters fringed with a white line of surf as its waves fell upon the shore. Before me was the plain of Acre, one of the richest in Palestine, the fruitful portion of Asher, who dipped "his foot in oil" (Deut. xxxiii. 24), and of whom the dying Jacob said, "His bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties" (Gen. xlix. 20). The seaboard of the plain was rich in the varied colours of sand and bracken, of copse and common; while the more inland part of it was one vast expanse of early wheat, broken here and there by a grove of trees, which stood out like islands in the sea of green. Surrounding this bay of green,—the plain of Acre is almost semi-circular, Acre itself being about the centre of the diameter,—rose the fruitful hills of Lower Galilee, the fair inheritance of Naphtali and Zebulun, the more southern of which separate the maritime plain from the plain of Esdraelon, and whose slopes were terraced with fig and olive trees. From the height on which I stood I could trace the shore line from the beach beneath my feet to Haifa, which nestles at the foot of Carmel, a distance of twenty-five miles. This line is broken some three or four miles from Ras-en-Nakûrah by a low grey mound; on this mound is the village of Zib, the Achzib of Judges i. 31. Six or seven miles further south is a town completely surrounded with fortifications, standing on a narrow tongue of land run-

ning into the sea, so that it seems like a fortress rising from the ocean. This is Acre, the Accho of the Old Testament (Jud. i. 31), and the Ptolemais of the New (Acts xxi. 7). Then the eye takes in the noble sweep of the Bay of Acre, the curve of which is exactly like that of a reaper's sickle, the farther part of it formed by the ridge of Carmel, which projects far into the sea, and forms the only real promontory on the coast of Syria.

As I looked on the rich plain at my feet, I realised that the very productiveness of their portion was the snare of the Asherites. They never possessed either Achzib or Accho, whose inhabitants dwelt in their midst. Their fields stood thick with golden corn, their land was "a land of corn and wine and oil;" and so, yielding to the temptation of inglorious luxury, they selfishly stayed at home instead of rising up with Israel against a common foe. Hence the scornful irony of the Song of Deborah: "Asher continued on the sea-shore, and abode in his 'creeks.'"

The expression "creeks," or "breaches," is most descriptive. Not only do Zib and Acre stand on slight promontories, which naturally form bays on either side, but the whole coast line north of Acre, is full of "*breaks*," or, as our translation puts it, "*breaches*."

We close our comment on Judges v. 17 by observing that the tribe of Asher has its counterpart in multitudes of Christians in the present

day. God has prospered them in temporal things, but their success has proved a temptation. They seem to live merely to themselves. They avoid the conflict which the Church of Christ has ever to wage with the world and sin and unbelief. Unconsecrated wealth and selfish luxury are among the chiefest evils of the Church of Christ in this age. May no reader of this paper come under the withering curse of Deborah in the Song a passage of which we have been considering,—“Curse ye, Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.”

LXI.

"Our conversation is in heaven."—PHIL. iii. 20.

AS we read these words, we perceive that the term "conversation" must have a meaning different from that which the expression ordinarily conveys. The word in the original is "commonwealth," "citizenship," "country," or "state;" but the word as used in the New Testament seems to imply even more: it refers to character and conduct. St Paul uses a form of the same word when he says, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts xxiii. 1), and again when he writes in this very Epistle, "Only let your conversation (*i.e.*, your manner or mode of life) be as becometh the gospel of Christ" (i. 27). The French version unites both interpretations, and translates thus, "We conduct ourselves as citizens of heaven." Let me illustrate this reading. An Englishman and a Frenchman enter a drawing-room at the same time. We at once distinguish them by their national characteristics. The country in each case stamps, so to speak, the man and his manner. To put the thought in another form:

a soldier may be dressed as a civilian, and yet somehow we detect the man's profession by his very carriage.

St Paul, when describing the "enemies of the cross of Christ," says, "who mind earthly things"—they concentrate their interests, their thoughts and feelings, on earth—they are of the world; then drawing the contrast he adds, but we "who walk by the same rule and mind the same thing"—we who are a society of men with the same interests and the same aspirations—we live a life totally at variance with the men who belong to the "kingdom of this world." Our character bespeaks our citizenship. We belong to the corporation above. "Our manner of life is that of citizens of heaven."

The "state" of which St Paul speaks is at one time called "the kingdom of heaven," at another the "city of God;" at one time "Jerusalem which is above," at another "Mount Zion and the city of the living God." Let me briefly note two ways in each of which it may be truly said of a believer that his "citizenship is in heaven."

(1.) *Heaven is his birthplace.*

His generation is of earth, his regeneration is of heaven. He is "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Born of the Eternal Spirit, he is enrolled among the number of those who are "partakers of a heavenly calling," among those who are "no

more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." Heaven is his home. Like the Jews in Babylon he is in "a strange land," and as the Jews were known from among the dwellers in the land of their exile as citizens of Zion, so ought believers to be known in the world as those whose birth-place is the "New Jerusalem," and who, therefore, are ever looking to "a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."

(2.) *Heaven is the place where Jesus, his Prince, is.*

The Son of God has entered the gates of heaven, carrying captive sin and death, and has there "made a show of them openly" to the unspeakable joy of saints and angels. He is there as our representative and with our nature. Just as when the sun arises and climbs the vault of heaven, the lark leaves its nest on earth and pours forth its song of praise on high; so the believer ascends with Jesus. He seeks "those things which are above." He "is raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." His name is enrolled among the burgesses of the celestial city, in the sacred register of the Prince, "the Lamb's book of life." There his Prince is preparing the throne upon which he will sit, the robe, white and clean, in which he will be arrayed, the incorruptible crown which he will wear. The soldiers of the city are the "innumerable company of angels," each of whom

is girt with immortal strength : these are now his fellows. And there too are the "spirits of just men made perfect," those who already drink of the fountain, of whose streams we too are drinking—"the river the streams whereof make glad the city of our God."

In a word, heaven is the paradise into which Satan never enters, from which the saint never departs, and where the face of Jesus ever shines.

The word "is"—our "conversation is in heaven"—means in the original "is, even now;" so says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Ye *are* come unto Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem."

Reader, is this your *present* condition? If so, let your conversation on earth be distinctly that of a citizen of heaven. Let this holy city be ever the object of your aspirations and desires. Elevate your thoughts, your affections, and hopes to heaven; and you too will soon join that "great cloud of witnesses," who by their lives have testified to the power of faith, who "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth," and "who desired a better country, that is a heavenly;" and so "God was not ashamed to be called their God," and He "prepared for them a city." May we all be able to say with St Paul, "Our conversation is in heaven."

LXII.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field : which is the least of all seeds : but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."—*MATT.* xiii. 31, 32.

IN no part of Palestine have I seen a more luxuriant vegetation than in the plain of Acre. Rank weeds and gay flowers alike proclaim the fertility of the soil. The brilliant scarlet anemone, "the lily of the field," "arrayed" with a splendour with which "Solomon in all his glory" could never vie, the ranunculus and crocus, the hyacinth and tulip, the wild thyme and rosemary, and many another plant and flower formed a carpet beneath my feet far richer in colour than any Persian loom could weave.

There was one plant which, although it had little to attract the eye, gave me the deepest interest—the mustard plant of the text. The herb of our English garden is but a pigmy in comparison with the giant growth of a richer soil and a warmer clime. Dr Hooker measured a mustard plant in the Jordan valley ten feet

high. I myself have seen it in the fork of land between the Jordan and the Jabbok at least seven or eight feet in height. Dr Thomson, in his "Land and the Book," says that he has seen the mustard plant in the plain of Acre, which seems a favourite abode of the wild plant, as tall as the horse and his rider. An extract from a traveller of the name of Halket, may be of interest to the reader, and strikingly illustrates our Lord's parable:—

"As I was riding across the plain of Acre, on the way to Carmel, I perceived at some distance from the path what seemed to me a little forest or nursery of trees. I turned aside to examine them. On coming nearer, they proved to be an extensive field of the plant which I was so anxious to see (the mustard plant). It was then in blossom, full-grown, in some cases six, seven, and nine feet high, with a stem or trunk an inch or more in thickness, throwing out branches on every side. I was now satisfied in part. I felt that such a plant might well be called a tree, and, in comparison with the seed producing it, 'a great tree.' But still the branches, or stems of branches, were not very large or apparently very strong. Can the birds, I said to myself, rest upon them? Are they not too slight and flexible? Will they not bend or break with the superadded weight? At that very instant, as I stood and revolved the thought, lo! one of the fowls of heaven stopped in its flight through the air, lighted down on one of the branches,

which hardly moved beneath the shock, and then began, perched there before my eyes, to warble forth a strain of the richest music. All my doubts were now charmed away. I was delighted at the incident."

Other travellers tell us that the smaller birds, such as goldfinches and linnets, settle among the branches in flocks, for the sake of the seed, of which they are very fond.

Our Lord on three different occasions speaks of the smallness of the mustard seed (Matt. xiii. 31, 32, xvii. 20; Luke xvii. 6). I think there has been much needless perplexity in the minds of some writers as to our Lord calling the seed the "least of all seeds" whilst there are some still less. Christ was evidently using a popular or proverbial expression among the Jews. In several places in the Talmud the mustard seed is used to denote anything very minute. Archbishop Trench on this parable gives an interesting extract from the Koran. "Oh, my son, verily every matter, whether good or bad, though it be of the weight of a grain of mustard seed, and be hidden in a rock, or in the heavens, or in the earth, God will bring the same to light" (Sur. 31). As he observes, "The Lord in His popular teaching adhered to popular language." Besides, *it is the largest plant which comes from the smallest seed.* The plant is expressly called a herb, but, in comparison with the rest of herbs, it is not even an orientalism to call it "a great tree."

The simile used is most striking as a picture of the progress of the gospel in the world, and the marvellous issues of so small and insignificant a beginning. The parable was a prophetic one, and how it has been fulfilled let the "Acts of the Apostles" testify, or the Christian observer of to-day, who compares the gathering in the upper room at Jerusalem with the present aspect of the Church of Christ.

LXIII.

“Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts ; all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me.”—Pa. xlii. 7.

THE 42nd Psalm was most probably written by David when he was an exile from Jerusalem through the rebellion of his son Absalom. It was a time of deep sorrow when he stood in the “land of Jordan,” and looked “from the hill Mizar” among the mountain heights of Gilead upon those familiar hills to the west which encircled Zion. As he gazed, a yearning desire filled his soul, not for the luxuries of his palace, or for the comforts of his home, or for the adjuncts of kingly power, but that once more he might “appear before God” in His sanctuary. The ingratitude of his son, the rebellion of his subjects, and the malice of his adversaries, trials great as they were, were all overshadowed by a deeper trial still—his banishment from the courts of the Lord and from the assemblies of His saints: “When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me : for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday” (ver. 4).

Dean Stanley imagines that the expression, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts," was suggested to the mind of the Psalmist by the winding rapids which lay between him and his home. This idea seems borne out at first sight by the Septuagint translation, where the word for "waterspouts" is "cataracts," in conjunction with the fact that this part of the river Jordan abounds in rapids. Between the Lake of Tiberias and the Dead Sea, the river has a fall of over six hundred feet; hence its name Jordan, or "descender." Lieutenant Lynch, the American explorer, in his "Official Report," tells us that in his descent of the river he passed twenty-seven "threatening" rapids. In speaking of the intense stillness of some parts of the journey, he says that the birds ceased to sing as they hid themselves from the heat in the luxuriant foliage of the many trees which shadow the stream; and this silence was rarely broken, except by the noise of some far-distant rapid.

As I read his "Report," I thought that these "cataracts" must have suggested the imagery of the 42nd Psalm. Three years ago, as I stood on the bank of the river, and listened in the stillness of the evening to the "murmur" of these rapids, and then recalled the strength of the words, "All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me," the cascades of the Jordan seemed a very inadequate illustration of the floods of sorrow which overwhelmed the Psalmist's soul. Our own translation

"waterspouts" seems to be the true one. The word *καταρράκται* (cataracts) is applied to a tornado or rain-torrent—the bursting of a cloud. When I returned home, and turned to Thomson's "Land and the Book," I was pleased to find that he speaks not only of "waterspouts" at sea but of "waterspouts" bursting on the mountains. "In a few minutes," he writes, "the wadies along its track are swollen into furious rivers, which sweep away grain, olives, raisins, and every other produce of the farmer. I have frequently known them to carry off and drown flocks of sheep and goats, even cows, horses, and their owners also." In another passage where he is speaking of a waterspout as illustrative of Proverbs xxviii. 3, he says: "In the neighbourhood of Hermon I have witnessed it repeatedly, and was caught in one last year, which in five minutes flooded the whole mountain-side, washed away the fallen olives—the food of the poor—overthrew stone walls, tore up by the roots large trees, and carried off whatever the tumultuous torrents encountered as they *leaped madly down from terrace to terrace in noisy cascades.*"

The reader will at once perceive how striking is the image used by David. It seemed to him as if sorrow summoned sorrow, as "deep calleth to deep," to swallow him up. "All Thy *breakers* (such is the meaning of the word "waves") and Thy billows have gone over me."

LXIV.

"And it came to pass that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds."—NUMBERS xvii. 8.

WE read in Exodus xxviii. 1 of the call of Aaron to the high-priest's office. In the call and separation of Aaron to this sacred function his sons were included, and thus the law of succession was established,—God not only appointed Aaron, but debarred all others from intruding into the office. The destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and their two hundred and fifty confederates, and the cutting off fourteen thousand and seven hundred Israelites who sympathised in the rebellion, marked God's unchanging purpose as to His own right of appointment.

The miracle recorded in the text was intended for ever to set at rest the question of His choice of Aaron and his family to the office of the priesthood. Twelve rods, the sceptre of the head of each tribe—such rods as are represented in Egyptian hieroglyphics as badges of office, and

such as the Arab sheikh carries in his hand to-day—were laid out in the tabernacle of the congregation before the ark of God. In the silence of the night a miracle was wrought, and on the morrow the dry and withered rod of Aaron was found to be covered with buds and blossoms and fruit. This rod was laid up before the Lord as a standing memorial of God's election.

The incident is fruitful in its illustrative teachings. Space only allows me to mention two of them.

(1.) Who can doubt that Aaron's rod has a reference to the priesthood of Christ?

The resurrection of a dry and withered sceptre was the confirmation that the priesthood of Aaron was of Divine appointment. Its blossoms and fruits were emblematic of the vitality and continuance of a flourishing line of priests. In the antitype of the Aaronic priesthood we see a more perfect and complete fulfilment. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, when speaking of the office of the high-priest, says, "And no man taketh this honour unto himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron;" and then adds, "So Christ glorified not Himself to be made a High Priest, but He that said unto Him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten Thee." I need not stay to prove that these words of the second Psalm (7th verse) refer to our Lord's resurrection (Acts xiii. 33). Our Lord's resurrection was the proof of His Divine commission to

His office of priesthood. Who can speak of the buds and blossoms and fruits which declare the eternal priesthood of Immanuel? St Paul in his sermon at Antioch shows that the resurrection of Jesus was the fulfilment of God's pledge to David. "I will establish the throne of His kingdom for ever." What proves Christ a king proves Him a priest: the Messiah was to be a royal priest. "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." This "rod out of the stem of Jesse," now in the Holiest, is a rod of "strength,"—a sceptre whose power can never wither or decay. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning; Thou hast the dew of Thy youth. The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

(2.) We are told that Aaron's rod was the branch of an almond-tree; it "yielded almonds."

Let us notice the appropriateness of the emblem. Its name in Hebrew is *shaked*, "the waker" or the "waking-tree," because it is the first tree that awakes out of the sleep of winter. At Bethany I have seen the almond-trees laden with blossom when all other trees were bare. The budding almond-tree tells us that spring is nigh. The resurrection of Jesus was the harbinger to the Church of the awakening of them that sleep in Him: "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept . . .

but every man in his own order; Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming."

In the early spring of the present year, as I left the house of a dear friend and brother who had just departed, whilst the cry of the widow and orphans was still ringing in my ear, my eye caught sight of an almond-tree at the garden gate, covered with its exquisite bloom. It was the forerunner of spring. The parable of nature seemed sweetly to say, "Thy brother shall rise again." The words of God to Jeremiah seemed almost addressed to myself: "Jeremiah, what seest thou?" And I said, "I see the rod of an almond-tree." Then said the Lord unto me, "Thou hast well seen, for I will *hasten* my word (*i.e.*, I will be *early awake* with respect to my word) to perform it." Thus the almond-tree before me seemed not only a pledge of my friend's resurrection, but also an emblem of the speed and certainty with which the word of the Lord would be accomplished.

LXV.

"Fair as the moon."—SONG OF SOLOMON vi. 10.

MOST probably the verse from which I have selected the words before us represents the gradual progression of Divine revelation, in the various dispensations of the Church, from the first gleams of the morning in the patriarchal age to the full radiance of the sunlight of gospel times. Another view has been accepted. "The Church *looketh forth as the morning* in passing from the clouds of darkness, and beginning to shine with the light of truth; she is *fair as the moon* in this life, borrowing all her brightness from the Sun of Righteousness, and crescent or waning according as she is in prosperity or adversity; *clear as the sun* in the world to come, when radiant with the open vision of her Creator." * The moon seems such a perfect emblem of the Church of Christ and the individual believer in every age and under every dispensation, that I would in this paper note a few points of similitude.

* Philo. Carp. quoted by Dr Littledale in his "Commentary on the Song of Songs, from ancient and mediæval sources."

1. *The moon is appointed to give light by night.*

"The lesser light to rule the night" (Gen. i. 16). "Oh give thanks unto the Lord . . . to Him that made great lights . . . the sun to rule by day . . . the moon and stars by night" (Ps. cxxxvi. 8, 9). As certainly as in nature the moon is God's appointed mode of giving light to man in the absence of the "orb of day," so certainly is the Church God's appointed medium of light in the absence of the Sun of Righteousness. We see this truth typified in the tabernacle. The holy place had no windows, and with its roof of curtains and skins would have been in darkness but for the light of the golden candlestick. I know that there was a more immediate truth under this fact than the one to which I now give expression. St John, referring to the tabernacle service, describes Christ in His priestly vesture "in the midst of the seven candlesticks;" and then adds, "The seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven Churches." Our blessed Lord called the present dispensation a condition of night. "The night is far spent," and until the day dawn, and the Sun of Righteousness shall for ever disperse the darkness of ignorance and sin, He has appointed the "lesser light to rule the night." "Ye shine as lights in the world." The darkness may not comprehend the light, but none the less is it true. "The day is at hand" when the light of the Church shall be absorbed in the brightness of Christ's appearing, as the light of

the moon is absorbed in the light of the morning, and then "the greater light" shall "rule" the eternal day.

2. *The light of the moon is one of reflection.*

The moon is a dark opaque body, and yet she seems full of light. She shines with borrowed rays. The Church is intended to reflect the light and beauty of Jesus. Dark in herself, she is light in Him; ignorant in herself, she is wise in Him; debased in herself, she is exalted in Him; sinful in herself, she is righteous in Him; cursed in herself, she is blessed in Him; "black but comely." The words of St Paul are the expression of every believer's experience: "Found in Him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ; the righteousness which is of God by faith."

3. *The moon does not always shine equally.*

At one time she waxes, at another wanes. Immediately after the ascension of our Lord there were but a few disciples in an upper room, and yet but a few days, and with the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, "there were added unto the Church," in one day, "three thousand souls;" and yet a little while, and the Apostle of the Gentiles had preached the gospel from Jerusalem "round about unto Illyricum." At the end of the third century the little rill which trickled from under the door of the sanctuary had become a mighty river, and overflowed the throne of the Cæsars.

Then came a long season of decadence. The Church, which had waxed in apostolic times, waned for centuries. There came a transition from simplicity to corruption. But in the darkness of the mediæval ages the light of the moon was never extinguished. Again she was crescent at the Reformation. I must not enter on so wide a theme. The Church's history has been one of fluctuation and change, but even in her feeblest light her calm radiance has shone upon a world of darkness, speaking of a brighter splendour and the hope of a glorious day.

What an emblem is this phase of the moon's appearing of the history of the believer's soul! What changes! at one time full of light and love and zeal, and at another, low, cold, and dead. Sometimes the Christian is walking through "the valley of the shadow of death;" at other times he is in the land of Beulah, where the birds sing, where flowers strew the path, where the trees are laden with fruit, and refreshing streams flow beside his path. Paradise seems near, and the eye of faith can see the open gates of Heaven. At one time the soul sighs, "I sought Him, but I could not find Him;" at another she sings, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." With Beddome, many a believer has to say—

"We sin forsake, to sin return;
Are hot, are cold, now freeze, now burn;
Now sink to hell in dark despair,
Now soar to heaven and triumph there."

4. *The moon is eclipsed and darkened if the earth come between her and the sun.*

The limits of this paper forbid me to dwell upon the point. It speaks for itself.

5. *The moon is full of spots.*

There never has been and there never will be a perfect Church on earth. When we turn to the inspired record, we find that the saints who were remarkable for some particular grace failed in that very virtue. Abraham, the grand exemplar of faith, for lack of it fell into falsehood and deceit. Moses, the "meekest of men," was sorely punished for hastiness of lip. Job, the most patient, cursed the day of his birth. Peter, the ardent and loving, denied his Master with oaths and curses. They were all recipients of grace. They all reflected the light of the Sun of Righteousness. There has been only one life "clear as the sun," "without spot or blemish." Thank God, ere long the Church shall be like "the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth, a morning without clouds." The shadows will flee away. She shall be "light," and in her will be "no darkness at all." "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father."

LXVI.

"The salt sea at the south end of Jordan."—JOSHUA xviii. 19.

THE remarkable lake most generally known in the western world as the "Dead Sea" has several names in the Bible. By the prophets it is called the East Sea, as distinguished from the West Sea, the Mediterranean (Joel ii. 20; Ezek. xlvii. 18). It was also called the "Former" or "Fore Sea," the sea towards the sun-rising, as distinguished from the "Hinder Sea," or the sea towards the sun-setting (Zech. xiv. 8). In Deut. iv. 49, and 2 Kings xiv. 25, it is called "the sea of the plain," and in three other places, this title "sea of the plain"—in the Hebrew "sea of the Arabah," or "sea of the desert"—has the appended description, "the salt sea," "the sea of the plain, even the salt sea" (Deut. iii. 17; Joshua iii. 16, xii. 3). In one place (Ezek. xlvii. 8) it is simply called "the sea"—the Mediterranean Sea in the same passage, being designated "the great sea" (10th verse). How applicable is the general title, "the salt sea," may be gathered from the simple fact that, whilst ordinary sea-water contains four per cent. of salt, the Dead Sea contains twenty-six per cent., *i.e.*, Dead Sea water is six

times as dense as the sea at Brighton. A fresh egg thrown into the water only sinks two-thirds; and it is said that it is so charged with saline ingredients that ordinary salt will not dissolve when cast in. The reader will not be surprised to hear that water so dense extinguishes all animal life.*

On the shores of the Red Sea, and of the Lake of Galilee, the traveller collects shells with the eagerness of a child; but he can carry away no shell, unless a casting of the Jordan, as a memento of his visit to this inland lake. Dr Tristram, who visited the Dead Sea during the time of the winter floods, says, "Quantities of very small dead fish, the fry of the common Jordan species (*Chromis Niloticus*), lay on the gravel, killed by the salt water, and thrown up by the flood."† The Puritan Flavel did not keep up a fiction, as Bacon says many a fiction is kept up "because it serves for a good allusion, and helps the poet

* "Here at length we found life in the Dead Sea, the first and last we ever detected, in the larvæ of some small mosquito or gnat, which were wriggling about in the shallow lagoon" (Tristram's "Land of Israel," p. 324). From this it seems that inferior organisations find a home in these waters. Mr Poole caught some small fish in a warm salt spring a few yards from the sea; but this is no proof that they were denizens of the lake. In the Cabinet d'Hist. Naturelle, at Paris, there is a piece of coral said to have been brought from the lake in 1837, but no second specimen has been found. As Mr Grove observes, "It will not be safe to draw any deduction from these facts till other specimens have been brought from the lake." Mr Grove seems to "compass sea and land" to collect in one paper everything of interest and value which can be said of the Dead Sea, in his article "The Salt Sea" in "Smith's Biblical Dictionary." To this article I refer the reader.

† "Land of Israel," p. 248.

to a similitude," when he uses the Dead Sea as an illustration of the destruction of a sinner :—

"Like fish that play on Jordan's silver stream,
They bathe in sensual lusts, and never dream
Of that Dead Sea to which the stream doth tend,
And to their pleasure puts a fatal end."

Even fish taken from *salt water* immediately die when put into this lake. M. Louis Lartet in a paper on "The Saltness of the Dead Sea" says,* "Of the fact I myself made proof by transporting into the lake some small fish of the genus *Cypri-nodon*, from a *very salt* pool close by, which died directly they were immersed." Tristram tried the same experiment. He took some small fish from a salt spring, filled two basins with water, the one from the spring, the other from the sea, and put half-a-dozen fish in each; he found "the former all lively in the morning, while every one of those in the brine of the lake had turned lifeless on their backs" (p. 323). We see then how appropriate was the Bible name "the salt sea;" "and the outgoings of the borders were at the north bay of the salt sea, at the south end of the Jordan" (See Gen. xiv. 3; Num. xxxiv. 3-12; Deut. iii. 17; Joshua iii. 16, xii. 3, and xv. 2-5). Doubtless the sterility of the surrounding district, the utter desolation of the scene, and the great inertia of the water to the wind, arising from its density—though it sometimes rises to more than

* Appendix, vol. III., Ritter's "Comparative Geography of Palestine."

ripples—and, above all, the absence of animal life in the lake, originated the name of the “Dead Sea” even before the Christian era, though never found in the Bible or used by Jewish writers. It is an interesting fact that the Lord of life, who spent so many days by the Lake of Galilee, never seems to have visited this Sea of Death. We can easily see from the data already given, a sufficient groundwork for the tradition of early ages with reference to these singular waters, that the sea was ever still as death, that pestilential smells were continually emitted, that birds attempting to fly across the lake dropped down dead. When we add to this the once universally believed fallacy that beneath its surface lay the cities which are to suffer “the vengeance of eternal fire,” we can realise how the popular mind associates with these waters the idea of death, and horror, and gloom.

As some reader may ask, “How do you account for the remarkable saltiness of this lake?” I would anticipate the question by saying a few words on the subject. To heighten the importance of the question, I would remind the reader that, apart from the contributions of the Arnon and other minor streams, the Jordan alone discharges into the Dead Sea more than 6,000,000 of tons of water a-day. The surface of the lake is depressed 1300 feet below the level of the ocean, a fact unique in the physical geography of the world; there can therefore be no marine communication. The pool is an isolated basin, without outlet of any

kind. The saltness is caused, (1.) By the constitution of the environs of the lake, such as the ridge of rock salt called Jebel Usdum, at the south-west end of the lake, which is several miles in extent, and from which salt streams are continually draining into the sea. (2.) By the gypsum and saliferous beds at the bottom of the lake, and by the hot springs around and beneath the sea, conveying into it their saline ingredients. Many of these springs have ceased to exist, but their deposits remain.* (3.) By the enormous and incessant evaporation, owing to the intense heat of the Ghôr. It has been computed by an eminent chemist, that while the average quantity of water supplied "cannot exceed 20,000,000 of cubic feet, the evaporation may be taken at 24,000,000 cubic feet per diem." I need not say that in evaporation, whilst the moisture is drawn up, the constituent salts are left behind. Water which holds a large amount of water in solution, and which receives continual supplies, and which is at the same time subject to incessant evaporation, acquires a degree of saltness quite exceptional, as in the case of the Dead Sea.

* "In any case, it is to the existence of hot springs in connection with the axis of dislocation of the basin of the Dead Sea, that I find it most natural to attribute the main origin of the ingredients of the lake, much more so than to the rock salt and gypsum of the cretaceous beds, the effect of which has been of secondary importance in the concentration of the water."—"Remarks on the Variation in the Saltness of the Dead Sea, &c.," by M. Louis Lartet, communicated to the Société Géologique de France. See Ritter, vol. III., Appendix iii.

LXVII.

"And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly towards heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey."—Acts i. 9-12.

I SHALL not in this paper confine the attention of the reader absolutely to the text, but give an account of a Sabbath morning's walk which I took to the scene of the Ascension, as in so doing I shall be enabled to illustrate several texts associated with a spot so sacred to the Christian heart. I left our tents with my friend H—— at 5 o'clock in the morning, as we wished once again, before leaving Jerusalem, to visit the village of Bethany. Skirting the city walls, we soon reached St Stephen's Gate. Tradition asserts that the protomartyr was stoned in a hollow of the valley below. We begin to descend into the ravine of the Kedron. The central summit of

Olivet—the real Mount of Olives—“over against the Temple” (Mark xiii. 3), is directly in front. As the grey limestone ridge, with its rounded peaks, rises precipitously before us—“the hill that is before Jerusalem” (1 Kings xi. 7), “the mountain which is at the east side of the city” (Ezek. xi. 23)—we contrast its present barrenness with its former verdure, when to the dwellers in the city it must have seemed to rise from the east wall of the city like a vast hanging garden. We are told that on the return from the Captivity, this hill, the “mount” of Jerusalem, supplied the Jews “with olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees to make booths” (Neh. viii. 15). What a mighty change will pass over Palestine when the feet of Jesus shall stand “on the Mount of Olives!” Dry and arid as the land now is, it is but waiting for the return of the “Sun of Righteousness,” when, like the chrysalis, it shall suddenly burst forth into a higher and more glorious life.

With what a sense of mystery one looks down this valley of Jehoshaphat, along whose sides lie the ashes of unnumbered hosts! The very fact that no inscription meets the eye—that a hundred generations are buried out of sight, nameless and forgotten—gives a strange and thrilling interest to this true “valley of the shadow of death.” We cross the bridge which spans the dry torrent-bed of the Kedron — “the brook” over which

David passed in his flight from the rebellious Absalom (2 Sam. xv. 23). So vividly are the details of this flight given in the sacred record, that, as it has been well observed, "the reader, with a map of Olivet before him, may trace almost every step of that sad procession." But the tears that fell from David and his people are forgotten in the remembrance of Him who, on this mountain, sweat "as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." We tread this "*via dolorosa*" as if it were the aisle of the house of prayer where we are wont to worship.

- Every reader is familiar, from engravings or photographs, with the enclosure between the fork of the higher and lower Bethany roads, which is called the "Garden of Gethsemane." The olive-trees within those walls, though not contemporaneous with the time of our Lord—for Josephus distinctly tells that every tree was cut down by Titus—that "the suburbs were left naked"—are very probably the shoots which sprang up from the boles of the trees which grew in His days.
- We will not enter; let us not destroy any realisation of the scene which rises before the mind by contact with monkish details as to the "*terra damnata*"—the exact ledge of rock on which the disciples slept "when their eyes were heavy." It is enough that on this hill was "a place called Gethsemane," or the "oil press," where Jesus "was bruised for our iniquities." If I were anxious to decide the exact spot, I cannot look

upon the Latin enclosure as the true "garden." From its very position, between two public roads, it could never have been secluded. In the East paths never vary; and these give evident signs of extreme age. In the time of our Lord the traffic between Jerusalem and Jericho was very great. Probably the true Gethsemane is higher up the hill. Wherever it lay, it was a spot to which Jesus was accustomed to go (John xviii. 1, 2)—a garden where He had the right of entry at all times—probably belonging to some disciple, where He could sleep in the summer nights (John vii. 53, viii. 1 · Luke xxi. 37), or retire for prayer and communion with His disciples.

We must not be tempted to linger. As we climb up "the ascent of Mount Olivet" (2 Sam. xv. 30)—"the way of the wilderness" (23rd ver.)—how every step reminds us of parable and prophecy! We have barely passed the summit when a noble panorama bursts upon us. A single glance northward to Neby Samwil (Mizpeh)—southward to the "Frank Mountain," the conspicuous beacon height, the Bethhaccerem of Jer. vi. 1—must suffice. Of the western view, embracing the city with its hills and valleys, the plain of Rephaim and the "mountains of Bether," &c., space forbids me to speak. Our faces are towards Bethany; and what a landscape meets the eye! We see that the mountain ridge on which we stand is a screen between the city and the wilderness—between life and death. From our feet

bare hills and white cliffs roll, and shelve, and dip into the "plain of the wilderness" (2 Sam. xv. 28) ten miles below; and yet how startlingly near does everything seem in the clear morning light! The eye follows every wind and turn of the meandering line of green which betrays the course of the Jordan. The Dead Sea, which lies 3600 feet beneath us, gleams like "a caldron of molten lead." A gigantic wall—the mountains of Gilead, and Moab, and Abarim, with its summits Nebo and Pisgah—is the margin of a folio page of nature, which seems almost to stand alone in the fulness of its connection with the words of Divine Writ.

How delightfully hushed and still was that Sabbath morning! As, within sight of Bethany, we sat under an olive-tree and read Luke x. 30–42, John xi., Luke xxiv. 48–52, Acts i. 9–12, how intensely real it all seemed! From some spot on this eastern slope, within sight of that home which had been to Him as a harbour in the wild and wintry storm of life, Jesus ascended into heaven. Two thousand years have rolled by, and still is He within the veil. Do we marvel that He tarries "so long within the Temple?" "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." We

cast a telegraphic glance over the Church's work in the world and then read, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." Bethany itself is a miserable village of twenty or thirty hovels, from which rises a ruined keep. In its name it still records the great event with which it is associated—el-Aziriyeh, from el-Azir, the Arabic form of Lazarus.

I dare not occupy much more space. We returned by the Jericho road, and had scarcely left the village before we caught a view of the south-eastern corner of the city. The crowds of Paschal pilgrims who passed us in one continuous stream on their way to the Jordan, whilst breaking on the delightful solitude we had so much enjoyed, helped us to realise in some measure the scene of the triumphant entry. We descend a slight depression, and, as the city is lost to our view, we climb a wall, and seek a quiet spot to read Matt. xxi. 1-10; Luke xix. 28-44. We return to the road, climb an ascent, and then the city bursts upon us. Twice before had I come upon this view; but the suddenness with which the city sprang up before the path seemed startling as ever. Dean Stanley, when describing the view from the rocky ledge on which we stand, the spot where Jesus beheld the city and wept over it, says, "Immediately below was the valley of the Kedron, here seen in its greatest depth, as it joins the valley of Hinnom, and thus giving

full effect to the great peculiarity of Jerusalem—seen only on its eastern side—its situation as of a city rising out of a deep abyss ” (“Sinai and Palestine,” p. 192).* We gaze in silence on the city before us, which rises from the Haram platform like the steps of a Roman amphitheatre:—

“How boldly doth it front us! how majestically,
Like a luxurious vineyard, the hill side
Is hung with marble fabrics, line o’er line,
Terrace o’er terrace, nearer still and nearer
To the blue heavens!” †

An hour afterwards, as I lay at the door of the tent, and looked dreamily down the valley of Gihon, my thoughts were far away. We were to worship on Mount Zion—some of us to preach, some to read, all to celebrate a Saviour’s dying love; but the very associations of the place may prove a temptation. It is the Spirit alone that can reveal the things of Christ to the soul. It is by Him alone we can say, “We are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God,

* “There is but one approach to Jerusalem; and if possible, even at the cost of some hours’ détour, let the pilgrim endeavour to enter from the east, the favourite approach of our Lord, the path of His last and triumphant entry. . . . To one who is familiar with this magnificent access, the other three approaches to the Holy City recall the contrast between the grand old entrance to Oxford from the Iffley Road under Magdalen Tower, and the wretched lanes by which Alma Mater is now revisited when the traveller arrives by railway.”—Tristram’s “Land of Israel,” pp. 173, 174.

† I quote Dean Milman’s lines because of the striking illustration of the vineyard. The expression “marble fabrics” refers of course to ancient Jerusalem.

the heavenly Jerusalem." Much then, dear reader, as you may envy me the privilege of my morning walk to Bethany, and my Sunday on Zion, remember that the "way to heaven lies as equally open from Britain as from Jerusalem." Not only to the hour of death, but also to the hour of prayer, we may apply the words of Jerome, which Bonar has paraphrased in his "Hymns of Faith and Hope:"—

“Not from Jerusalem alone
To heaven the path ascends;
As near, as sure, as straight the way,
That leads to the celestial day,
From furthest realms extends—
Frigid or torrid zone.”

LXVIII.

“And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, and said to his servant, Go up now and look towards the sea.”—
1 KINGS xviii. 42.

EL-Muhrakah, which lies at the eastern end of the ridge of Carmel, where the wooded heights of the mountain “sink into the usual bleakness of the hills of Palestine,” is a platform of natural rock almost overhanging the plain of Esdraelon. Dressed stones lie about in every direction. The view from this terrace is one of the finest, and certainly one of the most interesting in Palestine. For some moments there was a subdued silence as the view suddenly burst upon us, and then came a series of eager exclamations as one and another detected some point of interest in the wonderful panorama—the mountains of Galilee enclosing Nazareth, Tabor, Little Hermon, Gilboa, the sites of Shunem, and Jezreel, Megiddo and Nain. Temptingly as the landscape is stretched out before me, I must forget it, and concentrate your attention on the text which heads this paper. Never have I read a chapter of

the historical books of the Old Testament with more intense interest than I did the 18th chapter of the 1st Book of Kings on the very scene of the events so accurately described. When I came to the 42d verse, I realised that I was like Elijah on "the top of Carmel." For the first time I noted the apparent discrepancy: "Elijah went up to the *top of Carmel*," and he "said to his servant, *Go up* now, and look toward the sea." There is no contradiction. As you stand on el-Muhrakah you are on "the top of Carmel"—the summit of the mountain; but the view of the Mediterranean is intercepted by a slightly rising ground to the west or north-west side. "Go up" this shoulder, which you do in a few seconds, and the sea is distinctly visible. As the prophet's servant went the seventh time, he said, "Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand," a certain harbinger of rain in Palestine. "When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is" (Luke xii. 54).

As I sit at my desk and write this paper, and as I again take my Bible and read 1 Kings xviii., and memory recalls my visit to el-Muhrakah; and as I see down below me the winding stream of the Kishon, by whose banks the slaughter of the priests of Baal took place, retaining in its very name Nahr-el-Mukatta ("the river of slaughter") the remembrance of the event; and as my eye rests upon a low green mound near the river,

called to this day "Tell Cassis," *i.e.*, "the hill of the priests," where the transaction is supposed to have occurred; and as in the far distance across the plain I see the eminence of Zerîn, the ancient Jezreel, on whose palaces and temples the sun must have gleamed—the events of that day seem enacted over again: they pass before me as a diorama, and the whole chapter assumes an air of indescribable reality.

LXIX.

"Thine head upon thee is like Carmel."—CANTICLES vii. 5.

CARMEL, or as Jeremiah calls the mountain "Carmel by the sea," the great sea westward—the Mediterranean (to distinguish it from the Carmel near the Dead Sea, so intimately connected with the life of David) means a "fruitful field," a "park," "a place of vineyards." When terraced with vines, and olive, and pomegranate trees, Carmel must have looked like a vast hanging garden. Never have I seen a more luxuriant vegetation than on this mountain. The ground beneath my feet was completely spangled with flowers, whilst in many places I had the greatest difficulty in pressing my way through an almost impenetrable jungle, the lair of the hyena, the wild boar, and even at times of the panther. How productive it must have been when the vine-dressers of Uzziah cultivated its slopes! To "feed the flock on Carmel" was an expression which indicated the richest of pastures (Jer. ii. 19; Mic. vii. 14). No wonder that the "excellency of Carmel" (Isa. xxxv. 2) should prefigure to the mind of an Israelite the

restoration of his country in all its glory under the coming Messiah, and that the withering of the top of Carmel (Amos i. 2) should be a type of its national desolation. I cannot forbear to add some lines from Van de Velde, who was the first of modern travellers to explore the ridge of Carmel, and to whom we are indebted for the discovery of the scene of Elijah's sacrifice. He says, "What a memorable morning in this wild flower-garden. It was at the most inviting season, too, for it was spring. The verdure is now fresh and vivid; the hawthorn, the jessamine and many another tree and shrub, whose sweetly odorous and elegant bunches of blossoms are unknown to me by name, are now in flower. . . . The oak, the myrtle, and the laurel have tempered their dull winter green with glittering leaflets of a lighter hue; and what a variety of sorts of flowers are trodden upon by the traveller in his way. There is not one that I have seen in Galilee, or on the plains along the coasts, that I do not find here again on Carmel, from the crocuses on the rocky ground to the fennel plants and narcissuses of the Leontes; from the intense red, white and purple anemones of the plains to the ferns that hide themselves in the sepulchral caves." *

After this description the reader will understand the force and beauty of the figure: "Thine head upon thee is like Carmel." Whilst the counten-

* Vol. i. p. 317.

ance of the bridegroom is compared to the noble majesty of Lebanon, the head of the bride, with its beautiful tresses, is typified by the rich foliage of Carmel. May we not also compare the gay and brilliant flowers and blossoms to the gems that adorned it?

LXX.

"Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory."—EPHESIANS i. 14.

THE whole structure of the Epistle to the Ephesians rests upon the doctrine of the Trinity. The work of God the Father is the subject of the first six verses of the first chapter; that of God the Son of the next six verses; whilst the work of God the Holy Ghost is brought before us in verses 13 and 14, where the apostle speaks of the members of the Church at Ephesus as being sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. This "sealing" is spoken of as subsequent to their reception of salvation. The Holy Spirit first influenced their souls to accept Christ, and then superadded the sealing to confirm them in their faith. "After that ye believed, ye were sealed." No more striking symbol could be given of the confirming and comforting operations of the Holy Spirit in the heart of a believer, than to speak of them as "sealing." A seal imprints a likeness, and therefore the sealing of the Holy

Spirit is objectively the manifestation to the world of the believer's likeness to Christ, and subjectively the manifestation to the soul, through the realisation of a growing conformity to Christ, of the clear and distinct agency of the Holy Spirit. It is not the object of this paper to open out the illustration of a seal. I would simply add, that a seal appropriates, it distinguishes, it authenticates, it secures. The effect of this sealing is peace of conscience and "joy in the Holy Ghost." The believer who is thus sealed can say in the "full assurance of faith," "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." The apostle states that this sealing is the "earnest of your inheritance." We cannot grasp the preciousness of this statement unless we have a clear and distinct comprehension of the illustration used; viz., that of an *earnest*. The word "*earnest*," *arrabon*, is doubtless of Phœnician origin. It originally signified the pledge or pawn which gave security to a contract. It is used in Gen. xxxviii. 17; Judah promised Tamar a kid, and she asked for an "*arrabon*" (the word in the Hebrew and the Septuagint is the same), or pledge, until he sent it. As the Phœnicians had trading transactions with almost every part of the Mediterranean Sea, the word "*arrabon*" became one of universal acceptance, just as the word "*tariff*," derived from the Spanish traders, is found in almost every modern language. When the Greeks, however, adopted the term, they gave

it a distinct and technical meaning. It was not merely a pledge or security, it was something more; it signified the deposit paid by a purchaser on entering into a contract for the purchase of anything. In the early part of the second century, Latin writers substituted the word *arrha* for *ar-rabon*. The word *arrha* is that used at the present day in our courts of law; it appears in the French "arrhes." The Scotch "arles-money" is but a modification of the word used by the apostle. The Arab of to-day, when speaking of earnest money, uses the word as it originally stood, *ar-rabon*. As this word "earnest" is a legal and technical term, we shall arrive at a more exact meaning of the truth which lies under the illustration used by the apostle, if we notice the three points in which an "earnest" is distinguished from an ordinary pledge or security.

(1.) A *pawn* or security must have an equal or approximate value with the money that it is pledged for. An *earnest* is simply a *part payment*; it may be but a shilling in a thousand pounds. However small the earnest may be, it makes the contract binding. "If any part of the price is paid down, *if it be but a penny*, or any portion of the goods delivered by way of *earnest* (which the civil law calls *arrha*, and interprets to be *emptionis venditionis contractæ argumentum*), the property of the goods is absolutely bound by it."*

* "Blackstone's Commentary," vol. ii., part 2. On "The Right of Things."

The apostle tells the Ephesian converts that the peace and joy which they experienced under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, was an *earnest* of their inheritance. The term implied absolute security, but it implied more. It told them that their fullest joy and their deepest peace were as nothing in comparison with the full possession. Like the grapes of Eshcol, they were but a cluster from the vineyards of the land into which they were about to enter. The joy which they experienced now, when compared with the "fulness of joy" at the "right hand" of God, was but as the glimmering of a star in comparison with the sun shining in his strength.

(2.) The thing pledged may be of another kind from that for which it is pawned. Judah gave his signet, bracelets, and staff as security for a kid. For money a man may pledge his jewels, his clothes, his land. But an earnest is *of the same kind*. There is *identity* of kind between the deposit and the future full payment. In one place, St Paul calls the sealing "the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. i. 22); in another, "the firstfruits of the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 23). As the "firstfruits" were pledges of the same kind or nature with the ensuing harvest, so also the peace and joy which dwells in the heart of a believer is not only a pledge of future felicity, but it is also of the same kind. It has been often said, "Grace is glory in the bud, glory is grace in the flower." Is heaven spoken of as a rest?

"There remaineth a rest for the people of God" (Heb. iv. 9). The believer receives an earnest of the rest here. "We which have believed do enter into rest" (Heb. iv. 3).

"That heavenly calm within the breast
Was the sure pledge of heavenly rest."

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him, but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit" (1 Cor. xi. 9, 10).

(3.) The pledge or pawn is given back when the money is paid. Not so the "earnest"; it is part in hand, and is *comprehended in the contract*. "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you for ever."

Let us now turn briefly to the expression, "purchased possession," as it stands in relationship to the earnest of which the apostle speaks—"until the redemption of the purchased possession." It is evident that the "redemption" does not refer to "redemption in its first stage made by the blood of Christ, which secures our *title*, but in its final completion, when the actual possession shall be ours—the full 'redemption of the body' (Rom. viii. 23) as well as the soul from every infirmity"—when "creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. viii. 21). The word

in the Greek for "purchased possession" is a technical term applied in the Old Testament to Israel as God's own special people. St Peter uses the same phrase when he speaks of the spiritual Israel as a "peculiar people," *i.e.*, a "purchased people" (1 Pet. ii. 9). The allusion is to Ex. xix. 5: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice, indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people; for all the earth is mine." The words for a "peculiar treasure" are literally a "purchased" or "acquired people." "Peculiar" simply means "one's own." "The Lord's portion is His people, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance" (Deut. xxxii. 9). God's people are not only His by choice, but by purchase: "The Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts xx. 28). The "purchased possession" then signifies the people of God. St Paul tells the members of the Church at Ephesus that God had acquired or purchased them for Himself,—they were His. There were still some impediments to their complete deliverance—sin, Satan, and death. These would, by-and-by, be absolutely and completely removed. The Ephesian converts were a "purchased possession;" they were not yet, however, finally and completely redeemed. Meanwhile, until the time of that redemption they were "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" as an earnest, which was both a security for, and also a foretaste of their joy in heaven.

LXXI.

"And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in."—MATTHEW xxvii. 7.

TWO thoughts must continually occur to the mind of the Bible student who sojourns at Jerusalem—viz., the literal fulfilment of prophecy, and the accuracy of detail in the Scripture narrative. These thoughts are suggested at every turn. I give an illustration of each.

I had just passed Birket-es-Sultan, the lower pool of Gihon, and was turning the shoulder of Zion, when my attention was arrested by a voice—a ploughman shouting to his oxen. I looked up, and saw the fulfilment of the prophecy of Micah the Morasthite, recorded by the prophet of Anathoth. "Zion shall be ploughed like a field" (Jer. xxi. 18; Micah iii. 12). (On a subsequent occasion I plucked the ripe ears of corn in a field just outside the Zion gate.) While I was thinking of this prophecy, and how unlikely it must have seemed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in Micah's days, that Zion so crowded with buildings should ever become a field, my attention was aroused to another object of interest by the

friend who was with me—a resident in Jerusalem, who pointed out to me the traditional Aceldama. The side of the hill to the right was honeycombed with tombs, which became more and more numerous at every step. Whilst there is hardly a trace of the life of ancient Jerusalem, of her palaces and homes, the monuments of her dead abound everywhere. The “field of blood,” bought with the “thirty pieces of silver,” lies on a narrow terrace half-way up the hillside. “The front of the hillside is cretaceous, and it is well known that chalk is always favourable to the rapid decay of animal matter.” Those of my readers who have been at Pisa will remember that the soil of the Campo Santo was brought by the Pisan Crusaders from this spot on account of this property, as well as for its supposed sanctity. Doubtless, the site was also selected for a burying-place, because the holes from which the potter’s clay had been excavated could so easily be utilised as tombs. “That such a consideration did influence the inhabitants of large cities we know from the example of Athens, where the principal cemetery was called the ‘Keramicon’ or ‘Pottery’ from this very cause.”* My friend, who had resided many years in Jerusalem, told me a most interesting fact:—Some years ago this charnel house was explored; a great many skulls were found, and those of various formations, showing that it was a general cemetery for foreigners.

* Professor Palmer’s “History of the Jewish Nation,” p. 9.

He himself had held several of these skulls in his hand. I was deeply interested some time afterwards to see this statement corroborated in Bonar's "Land of Promise." In a footnote the writer gives a quotation from Wilde the explorer: "From all the circumstances connected with these tombs . . . the remarkable human formations found in them, so perfectly different from one another, and these belonging to foreign nations, and not to Hebrews, I conceive there is a strong probability, almost amounting to presumptive proof, that this sepulchre was one of those tombs, if not the actual one, purchased with the thirty pieces of silver, to bury strangers in."

LXXII.

"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Ramah was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they are not."—
MATTHEW ii. 17, 18.

EVERY reader of these pages is doubtless familiar, either from photograph or engraving, with Rachel's tomb, near Bethlehem—a small square stuccoed building with a dome. Without doubt, the building is on the spot where once stood the pillar erected by Jacob over the remains of his wife Rachel,—the first recorded instance of the setting up of a sepulchral monument. Moslem, Jew and Christian alike look upon this tomb with reverence. Why does this unsightly sepulchre appeal to the feelings so deeply, whilst we gaze upon the noble so-called tombs of Zacharias and Absalom in the valley of Jehoshaphat with comparative indifference? Not because we admire Rachel's character, but the deep devotion of Jacob's love, which was to the patriarch as a palm-shaded fountain in a life where the oases were but few; the touching story

of Rachel's death in the moment of the fulfilment of her desire, together with a husband's life-long grief, combine to form a history full of pathos and tender interest. "As for me . . . Rachel died by me . . . when yet there was but a little way to come to Ephrath; and I buried her there in the way to Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem" (Gen. xlviii. 7). I would remind the reader that Rachel had and still has a position in the Jewish mind occupied by no other woman. Through her sons—the one the father of Ephraim, the principal tribe of Israel, the other the head of a tribe so closely allied with the royal tribe of Judah—she became the virtual mother of the whole race. Hence, the prophet Jeremiah by a fine but bold figure, at the time of the captivity, represents Rachel, who so passionately desired children, as rising from her well-known tomb by the wayside to Ephrath, and as so moved by the loss of her offspring, that her cry was heard to the very conspicuous but distant height of Ramah* (Jer. xxxi. 15); a prophecy which had its complete fulfilment in the murder of the "innocents" in the adjoining town of Bethlehem. The very contiguity of the tomb to the scene of the

* This is a very much controverted point. When Thomson says ("The Land and the Book," p. 645), "I cannot believe that either of the present well-known Ramahs could be meant; they were *too far off*," he points out the very beauty of the figure. The distance at which the cry is figuratively said to have been heard, bespeaks the pregnancy of the grief. His interpretation seems to me forced and unnatural.

slaughter adds force and beauty to the figure,
“ In Ramah was there a voice heard, lamentation,
and weeping, and great mourning ; Rachel weeping
for her children, and would not be comforted,
because they are not.”

LXXIII.

"By faith he (Abraham) sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise : for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."—HEBREWS xi. 9, 10.

MANY travellers have pronounced the ride from Hebron to Bethlehem to be one of the most uninteresting in Palestine. Luxury of landscape there is none, and yet the ride to me, in spite of occasional showers and intense cold, seemed anything but long. We were upon holy ground. Each hill and valley was a page of Bible history—each object around had suggested the imagery and poetry of psalm and hymn ; whilst the utter desolation and the complete absence of life—I do not remember meeting a soul during our afternoon's ride—recalled the words of prophecy. Each step too, was bringing us nearer to Hebron, the chief centre of patriarchal life, and one of the most sacred spots in Palestine. That afternoon's reflection awakened an interest in Abraham and in his mission which subsequent thought has much deepened. In Jerusalem we stand, as it were, by the bank of the

river of the water of life, where "it was parted and became four heads;" from thence we see its life-giving streams flowing to every quarter of the globe. In journeying to Hebron we are tracing up this river to its source among the hills of Judæa, where dwelt "the Father of the Universal Church," in whose seed all nations of the earth should be blessed. Whilst all my readers must at times have thought of God's purposes in the history of the Jewish nation, and the wondrous mission of the Hebrew race, some may not have realised that the missionary annals of the Hebrew Church commenced with the "Father of the Faithful," when he received his call "from Ur of the Chaldees" to "the place which was shown unto him." As certainly as Palestine was set apart for the nation, so certainly was the south part of it divinely reserved for the family. The country itself was admirably adapted for the development of a vigorous race. In the arrangements of Providence the home was vacant. The Hamitic or Scythic settlers who had migrated from their original home on the Euphrates, had by this time spread themselves over the more fertile plains of the new country. The sparse occupants of the hills of Judæa gladly welcomed the new emigrants, who sought not conquest but peaceful occupation, and whose well-trained band would be a "wall of defence" from the raids of the children of the desert. It was some such feeling as this, I believe, that led Ephron the Hittite, in no "oriental figure of speech" to

offer the cave of Machpelah as a gift to one who was "a stranger and sojourner in the land," when he wished to bury his dead out of his sight—in the hope of securing his permanent settlement amongst them.* "Hear, my lord: thou art a mighty prince among us; in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead" (Gen. xxiii. 6).

But it is mainly in reference to the patriarch's influence upon surrounding nations that we mark the Divine purpose in the selection of the "place" occupied by Abraham. Never had any man so noble a field of missionary enterprise. The caravan routes of the world passed through the territory in which he sojourned. We may apply to it the words long afterwards spoken by God with reference to Jerusalem: "I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her" (Ezek. v. 5). The beacon was so placed that its light was marvellously diffused. The character and religion of the patriarchal chief would be discussed in the khans of Damascus and the city of the Pharaohs, as well as by the watch-fires of the desert. The encampment of the patriarch was "as a city set on a hill, which could not be hid."

I cannot forbear for a moment to note how the man was fitted for the post he occupied. Whilst the encampment of a "Bedouin sheikh" of the

* The ancestral burial-place is the one fixed element in the unstable life of a nomadic race.—Stanley's "Jewish Church," vol. i., sect. ii., p. 34.

present day may help us to picture the externals of Abraham's daily life, our ideas would be feeble and incorrect if we did not realise in him, apart from the living faith which was evidenced in so holy a life, a man of travel and culture, familiar with the courts of kings, and intimately acquainted with the great centres of civilised life. I dare not linger upon a theme so interesting and suggestive. To the man who was raised by the hand of God to so great a height as to be taken into His counsels and called His "Friend," who was His chosen instrument in the founding of an empire so vast and enduring, the wielding of an earthly sceptre, or the ambition of founding a city to "make" him a "name," must have appeared insignificant indeed. Hence his witness for God was seen not only in the sacrifice offered upon the altar, but also in the nomadic character of his daily life.

The conqueror of the hosts of Chedorlaomer,* "the ravager of the west," died, having no inheritance in the land—no, not so much as to set his foot upon. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in *tabernacles* with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

* Rawlinson's "Herodotus," App. Book i., Essay iv., § 5 and 20.

LXXIV.

“And all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.”—JOSHUA iii. 17.

MUCH as I had heard of the heat of the Ghôr, my two hours' ride from the Dead Sea to the Jordan exceeded all previous conception. The burning rays of a noontide sun beat upon our heads. At each step our horses sank to their fetlocks in the fine sulphureous dust, and the eye became dazzled with the yellowy whiteness of the glistening plain, over which it travelled in vain for some vestige of green where it could find relief. I fall back on the description of Moses:—“Brimstone, and salt, and burning . . . not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein” (Deut. xxix. 23). Suddenly, with a surprise which instinctively recalled the view of Jerusalem, which sprang up with such startling effect before our path as we approached from Bethany, we found ourselves at the top of a deep glen: we descended its sides, threading our way among the bushes until, equally suddenly, we saw a bend of the river—a bank of green jungle, and some white chalk cliffs. Could this cream-coloured torrent, gliding so rapidly between its mud banks, be the Jordan?

Almost for the only time during our tour I felt a sense of disappointment. The thousands of pilgrims who had passed us on the previous Sunday morning on the Jericho road, had left behind them the unmistakable traces of a multitude. The trodden and trampled bank, the dangled and broken branches of the trees, reminded me of a village green a day after the fair. The freshness, which to my mind was one of the prevailing ideas of the Jordan, was wanting. In spite of after-reading, the impressions of childhood had been too strong; the colouring of pictures and hymns, intensified and illumined by all its sacred associations, had painted the banks of the river as a very land of Beulah. Instead of a muddy stream, imagination had depicted a river clear as crystal :

“Through the dense green foliage stealing
Like a silver ray of light.”

By-and-by after a rest under the shade of the willows, and a draught of the sweet Nile-like water, more than once repeated, and the grateful hue of the foliage, and the sight of the river, affording, in spite of its colour, so refreshing a contrast to the blazing plain which we had just traversed, and above all, the strong associations of the place,

“All the deeds of sacred story,
All its marvels great and true ;
All that give the Jordan glory,”

gradually banished disappointment and weariness from the mind.

The hours spent at the pilgrims' bathing-place stand out among the most productive in my tour in Palestine, in the discovering to my mind of fresh Bible thoughts. The swiftness and rapidity of the river at our feet was but a picture of the current which passed through the mind in a place so full of sacred connections; the only difference being, that the river had a steady flow, whereas some thoughts would linger more than others. In this paper, whilst speaking of the passage of Israel through the Jordan, I shall refer, though not immediately connected with my text, to the two other miraculous passages of this sacred river.

The pilgrims' bathing-place is the traditional place of the passage of Israel, and certainly the spot may be described as "right against Jericho;" the opposite cliffs, however, tell us that it could not have been at this identical reach, unless the current has changed the banks; but we know that the bed of the river before us was dry. We are told that the "waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon a heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan" (Josh. iii. 16); and Zaretan (or Zarthan, the present Sartaba, called Zartanah, 1 Kings iv. 12), was near to Succoth. The sacred narrative further adds, "And those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed and were cut off;" so that the bed of the river must have been dry, for at least twenty miles (Stanley and others say thirty). The fact explains how so vast a multitude could

have crossed the river in a few hours. The well-known line of the hymn, "Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood, should fright us from the shore," naturally occurred to my mind. Whilst we feel that the Jordan was not so much a type of death as of Israel's birth as a nation, and the Church's entrance into spiritual life, yet the subject of the passage will suggest the thought that it was because the feet of our Priest touched the river of death when it was at its "swelling," that His Israel who came after can stand "firm on dry ground, even in the midst." After the perusal of such a narrative we can comprehend how the hearts of the Canaanitish kings must have "melted because of the children of Israel," and we remember that the wonder was wrought "that all the people might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever."

Whilst at certain seasons it is quite possible to ford the Jordan in many places in the lower parts of its course, even with flocks and herds, yet how impossible it would be to do this during "barley harvest," whilst the river is at its flood, we gather from 1 Chron. xii. 15; we have here one of those numberless instances of undesigned coincidences with which the Scripture abounds. It is recorded as a wonderful feat of certain of David's warriors, men "whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as roes upon the mountains," that they ventured to cross the

"Jordan in the first month, when it had overflowed its banks." The deed, and the names of those who accomplished it, have been handed down to posterity. This chapter in the Book of Chronicles not only incidentally mentions the fact of the swelling of the Jordan at the very time, "in the first month," in which Joshua tells us he found the river to overflow, but also explains the necessity of supernatural aid for the passage of any but the strongest men—that of the women and children, the flocks and herds, of the children of Israel.

We remember that the stream before us was again divided when Elijah, the Gileadite, accompanied by his devoted servant, Elisha, crossed over to the eastern bank; doubtless, apart from its greater privacy, that his last gaze of earth might be on scenes which had been so familiar to his earlier days. "And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground" (2 Kings ii. 8). As we read the narrative we almost seem to hear the words of Elijah's successor, as the heir to the prophetic office, when, realising its great responsibility, he pleads for the privilege of the first-born, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." "And it came to pass as they still went on and talked, that, behold there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder: and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." Yet once again was the

Jordan miraculously divided, when the returning prophet smote its waters with the mantle of Elijah, now the symbol of his own commission. "And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither, and Elisha went over."

As we allow our thoughts for a moment to dwell on the rapture of

"The great Tishbite, who on fiery wheels
Rode up to heaven, yet once again to come,"

we realise an instance of what so often strikes the mind of a traveller in Palestine—in how circumscribed a space, in how small a region, did the great events of the Bible occur. From one of the heights which bound the plain on the east, the Archangel Michael conveyed the body of the raised Lawgiver of Israel to the gates of heaven; from the shoulder of Olivet in the mountain range to the west, the "Lord of Life," while words of blessing yet hung upon His lips, ascended to His mediatorial throne; from the plain across the river, Elias, the representative of the prophets, was transferred—and whilst transferred was transformed—to the uplands of glory. These converging lines of hill and plain meet where our thoughts, too, are strangely blended on the noble snow-capped height to the north, "the high mountain apart," the scene of the Transfigura-

tion, where the face of Jesus "did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light;" where Peter and James and John were "eye-witnesses of His majesty," where "there appeared Moses and Elias talking with Him." In Hermon we seem to have the consummation of the history, not only of Israel national, but of Israel spiritual, "in the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

LXXV,

"Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?"—2 KINGS v. 12.

THE name of Jordan—or, as the Arabs call it, "El Urdun, or Sheriat-el-Khebir," "the great watering place," to distinguish it from Sheriat-el-Mandhur, the Hieromax—means the "Descender." The old derivation from "Ghôr" and "Dan" is abandoned from the simple fact that the river is called the Jordan (Gen. xiii. 10), centuries before the name Dan was given to the city of Laish, which lay in the region of the source of the river. It is interesting to remark that in the account of the passage of the river (Josh. iii. 16), the word for the coming down "of the waters of the Jordan," is the same as used in the singular for the river itself. How appropriate the name is (the names of rivers in all languages seem descriptive) may be gathered from the fact that the American explorer, Lieutenant Lynch, who was the "Rob Roy" of the Lower Jordan in the year 1848, found a descent between the Lake of Tiberias and the Dead Sea of over 600

feet. Stanley says, that there is only one instance known of a river having a greater fall—the Sacramento river in California. In addition to twelve islands formed by the stream, Lynch, in his Official Report, tells us that he passed twenty-seven “threatening” rapids. Among other interesting discoveries of this voyage was not merely the “flowing down” of the Jordan, but its great sinuosity. Lieutenant Lynch considered this an effect of its remarkable descent. “The great secret,” he writes, “of the depression between Lake Tiberias and the Dead Sea is solved by the tortuous course of the Jordan. In a space of sixty miles of latitude and four or five miles of longitude, the Jordan traverses at least 200 miles.” The Jordan is unique in many respects. It is a “river that has never been navigable—flowing into a sea that has never known a port, has never possessed a fishery—a river that has never boasted of a single town of eminence on its banks” *—a river that flows through a plain the level of which is far below that of the ocean. The course of this border river, this eastern boundary of the Promised Land (Numb. xxxiv. 12), lies, for the most part, at the bottom of a deep rent or fissure in the plain. On this account it has always been useless as a means of irrigation, and hence “adds hardly a single element of civilisation to the tract through which it passes.” Dean Stanley writes,

* Smith's “Bible Dictionary,” Jordan.

“ While Damascus, whilst Antioch, whilst Egypt, derive their very existence from their respective rivers, the Jordan presents the singular spectacle of a river almost wholly useless, as far as civilised man is concerned, through the long ages of its history.”* In a heat so tropical as that of the Ghôr, the reader can well imagine, as the waters of the Jordan are useless as a means of fertilisation, through what a desert it selfishly flows. In the days of Abram and Lot, when the waters of the springs around Sodom were economised by its inhabitants, when they were conveyed over the plain in miniature canals, “as in the land of Egypt,” wherever the streamlets reached they must have created, under the influence of a tropical sun, a paradise of verdure. Yet the oasis was simply a “ciccar” in a desert. Where the waters did not reach, the heat produced a parched waste. The Bible designation of the Jordan valley is almost invariably Ha-Arabah, “the desert;” Josephus and Jerome use the same term. Milton, when describing the view from the Mount of Quarantania, a mountain on the west side of the plain, and the traditional scene of the Temptation, vividly depicts this feature of the plain of the Jordan—

“ It was a mountain at whose verdant feet
 A spacious plain, outstretched in circuit wide,
 Fertile of corn the glebe, of oil and wine.

* Stanley's “Sinai and Palestine,” p. 283.

With herds the pastures thronged, with flocks the hills,
Huge cities and high-towered, that well might seem
The seats of mightiest monarchs ; and so large
The prospect was, that here and there was room
For barren desert, fountainless and dry."

" PARADISE REGAINED," book iii.

Only the "here and there" would seem to have been applicable to the oasis rather than the desert. Lynch, whilst speaking of the banks of the "Jordan clothed with perpetual verdure, winding in a thousand graceful mazes, its pathway cheered with lays of birds, and its own clear voice of minstrelsy," adds, "its course a bright light in the *cheerless waste*." Doubtless on account of this dyke-like character of the river, as well as on account of its Tiber-like colour, affording in both respects so striking a contrast to his native streams, Naaman was led to exclaim, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean?" The common idea that the smaller size of the Jordan, "the waters of Israel," was contrasted with the "rivers of Damascus," is a mistake. The clear and pellucid "rivers of Damascus," like the streams of Paradise, flow through a garden; the clayey torrent of the Jordan steals through a desert.

LXXVI.

"There is a God that revealeth secrets."—DANIEL ii. 28.

THE belief in the existence of a Divine Being is a moral instinct which seems rooted in the very nature of man. Cicero says, "There is no nation without a God, without a supreme ruler." Besides this instinct of nature there are others allied with it which are equally universal—the belief in a Moral Governor of the universe, and the consciousness of a moral relationship to Him, a realisation of sin and a desire to appease the displeasure of the Divine Being. The universal use of sacrifice is doubtless to be traced up to the primeval source of divine revelation, but the need of sacrifice is the voice of natural religion proclaiming a consciousness of sin. Plutarch, the well-known biographer, declares in his day, "You may see states without walls, without laws, without coins, without writing; but a people without a god, without a prayer, without religious services and *sacrifices*, has no man seen." I would add yet another universal law of our moral being. In all countries there have been found traces of a belief in divine revelation. If a man believes in

a moral government, towards which he personally stands in moral relationship, the desire for a revelation becomes a necessity. The only valid objection to revelation would be the proof that there is no God. Hence all religions have professed revelations—it may be in the form of tradition, or in “civilised countries where writing has been known, in the shape of records claiming for themselves the authority of divine credentials.” The oracle at Delphi, the Sibylline books of the Roman, the Zendavesta of Zoroaster, the Koran of Mahomet, the Vedas and Puranas of the Brahmin, are simply the supply which proclaims a demand. A yearning for revelation is a voice of nature whose cries have been heard in every land and in every age. So strong is this feeling that thoughtful minds, detecting the false and craving the true, have waited and cried, and cried and waited, but “there was no voice, nor any that answered.” To deny revelation is to deny natural religion. I cannot give a more striking illustration of this requirement of our natural constitution than to record an anecdote narrated by Professor Luthardt in his “Fundamental Truths of Christianity.” I would premise that Lord Herbert of Cherbury, the father of English Deism, desired to set up a so-called natural religion in the place of positive Christianity. To further this end he wrote his celebrated treatise “On Truth as Distinguished from Revelation.” “He was filled with doubt,” says

Professor Luthardt, "whether its publication would contribute to the glory of God, and threw himself upon his knees to entreat His guidance. 'Give me a sign from heaven, or if not I will suppress my book. I had scarcely uttered these words,' says he, 'when a distinct yet gentle sound, unlike any earthly one, came from heaven. This so supported me, and gave me such peace, that I considered my prayer as heard.' Marvellous indeed! that God should be said to have given a direct sign, in attestation of a work which denies all direct revelation! So we are not to believe that God manifested Himself in Christ; because we are to believe that God manifested Himself to Lord Herbert of Cherbury."

We thankfully say with Daniel, as we study the pages of the Divine Word, "There is a God that revealeth secrets." We thank Him for the irrefragable proofs of its authenticity which are to be derived from external evidence; but there is one proof which demands our devoutest adoration, and one which the most unlettered reader of these pages can have. I speak of its *internal* evidence. "Philosophy seeks truth, Theology finds it, but Religion possesses it." Pascal finely says, "Human things must be known to be loved, but divine things must be loved to be known." The believer finds the truths of the Bible to carry with them their own credentials, and the "highest kind of evidence," as Luthardt well observes, "is that which truth bears to itself." I

cannot say with some writers that this kind of proof is not to be used in controversy with unbelievers in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. If mathematical propositions need to be mathematically demonstrated, surely moral truths are to be morally proved. The moral transformation which passes over every soul quickened by the Divine Word, is an evidence which may and ought to be used in the discussion of the question of Divine revelation. Medical men may freely debate the power and efficacy of a certain medicine, but the voice of every patient who has experienced its healing results yields a testimony which must be heard. In any case, and to this point I return, the sufferer restored to health and strength never doubts the efficacy of the means. Truth opens the eye of reason, and then reason sees—this is truth. The Christian may well say to the unbeliever in divine revelation with the man that was born blind: "Herein is a marvellous thing that ye know not whence 'it' is, and yet 'it' hath opened mine eyes." Revelation not only satisfies every craving of the soul, but also explains every contradiction of nature. "Man is a question; the Word of Christ is the answer: Man is an enigma; the Word is its solution." Has the Holy Spirit witnessed with your spirit that you are a child of God? If so, the harmony between your spiritual nature and this book, which is the creation of the same Holy Spirit, is to you the clear assurance that the Bible is a

Divine revelation. "When a plant or flower, that is a native of the dry land, falls into the water, it lies collapsed and flattened by the moisture which oppresses it. But when a piece of seaweed is thrown into a pool on the shore, how beautifully does it expand its feathery fibres, how brightly it unfolds its radiant hues, how joyously it waves its elegant streamers, as if luxuriating in its native element! So it is with the spiritually-minded reader of the Bible."* The believer luxuriates in the Word of God because there is an affinity between the "things of the Spirit of God" and his own spiritual discernment. When we remember how many philosophers craved for a divine revelation—when we remember how the prophets of old who knew only in part searched the inspired record, we may well pray that our souls may so prize this precious Word of truth that we may have the continual benediction of Him who said, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." "Secret things belong unto God, but the things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children."

* Whytehead's "Warrant of Faith," p. 449.

LXXVII.

"Bring of the fish which ye have now caught."—JOHN xxi. 10.

JUST as the history of Israel was, at least in one respect, typical of the history of Christ (Hosea xi. 1; Matt. ii. 15), so the life of Christ was a pictorial history of His Church (John viii. 12; Matt. v. 14, &c.) Not to speak of His birth and baptism, His temptation and transfiguration, we stand on the sure ground of revealed truth when we state that the grand facts of His crucifixion, His resurrection and ascension, have their spiritual analogies in the life of every believer. From this aspect of the life of our Lord it is deeply interesting to ponder His miracles as parables of the work of His Church. Absent bodily, He is ever spiritually present in His body—the Church; and through her instrumentality He is ever working miracles of grace, of which the miracles He wrought on earth on the bodies of men were but types and shadows. In the gospel kingdom the words of Isaiah have their fulfilment, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing, for

in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert."

I have made this somewhat long preface to the consideration of the words before us, because I believe that the second miraculous draught of fishes in connection with which the words at the commencement of this paper are recorded, was intended by our Lord to foreshadow the reward which will await all true workers at His coming and His kingdom.

There are three miracles which I believe form one pictorial parable, to be read by the Church in all ages, as declaring her *calling*, her *work*, and her *reward*. I refer to the first miraculous draught of fishes, the feeding of the multitude with five loaves and two fishes, and the second miraculous draught of fishes—the last recorded miracle of our Lord. The first miracle brings out the lessons which have to be learned by every one who is to be called in any way to minister in the Church. I will but mention these: "Without me ye can do nothing" (Luke v. 5). Out of the dust of deep self-abasement the Lord raises those who "from henceforth are to catch men" (v. 8-10). The second miracle stands out with clear and distinct outline as it depicts the work of the Church. The miracle of the loaves and fishes is one of the very few recorded by St John, and the only one related by all four evangelists. These facts bespeak its importance. Our Lord Himself has given the key which unlocks the parable, "I am the Bread of

Life." We have the world's necessity, "They have nothing to eat" (Mark vi. 36); the Church's mission, "Give ye them to eat." The Church's weakness, "We have here but five loaves and two fishes;" the Church's strength, "Bring them hither to Me." The order needed in the Church's work, "They sat down in ranks;" the Church's association in the Lord's work, "He gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude." The sufficiency of the supply, "They did all eat and were filled;" its adaptation to each, men, women, and children. The reward of the workers in time, "They took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full." "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself" (Prov. xi. 24, 25).

Let us now notice the last of these miracles. After His resurrection, the Master had told His disciples to meet Him in Galilee. "Tell my brethren that they go into Galilee; there shall they see me" (Matt. xxviii. 10). They are at their old avocation on the well-known lake, so emblematic of their calling as "fishers of men." They had "toiled all night," but they "caught nothing." Again they are to be reminded that without the presence of Jesus they are helpless as regards the catching of souls. In the grey of the early dawn a stranger stands on the shore. He calls to

them, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship and ye shall find," and now they are not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. The eyes of John are at once opened—"It is the Lord." All success and blessing come with His presence. And now they are to learn a lesson of encouragement with reference to the end of all work for the Master, when the results will be known at His coming again to reward His faithful servants. The *first* miraculous draught of fishes was doubtless a picture of the Church as it now is—*this* of the Church as it will be. "*Then*," to give Archbishop Trench's quotation from Augustine's Sermons, "the fish were brought into the ship which yet was itself still on the unquiet sea, even as it is thus that men at the present time who are taken for Christ, are brought into the Church, still itself exposed to the world's tempests, but *now* the nets are drawn to land, to the safe and quiet shore of eternity." *Then* the take was unnumbered, doubtless the haul was mixed—bad and good—*now* a definite number is given, all good and "great," "a hundred and fifty and three." Each soul shall be counted. The Lord's words will be true. "Those that Thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." And may we not add, without overstraining the simple historical fact, "for all they were so many, yet was not the net broken," that in this was the allegorical answer to our Lord's petition, "that they all may be one." Now we tread on firmer

ground. "As soon as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon and bread." Whilst they were toiling in the cold and wearisome night, He was thinking of them, and preparing the meal which they were to enjoy when the work was done. We are toiling now. He is watching; He still directs; He still blesses the labour, and He is even now preparing a place at the heavenly board for each of His servants. In the morning, when the work of night is done, He will appear, and we shall sit down at "the marriage supper of the Lamb." Will not this suffice? No. "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught." Can we not imagine their thoughts? "Lord, without Thee we should have caught none—Lord, Thou hast provided the meal." "Bring of the fish which you have now caught." Let these be added to the feast. Let them heighten the plenty of the festival. In that day when the workers shall say, "Here am I, and the children which Thou hast given me," every soul thus won by their instrumentality shall add to their joy and be an increased source of praise throughout the ages of eternity. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." The morning will soon dawn when true believers will stand on the heavenly shore, and when ministers, and Sunday-school teachers, and all who have been engaged in any way in work for Him, will hear His welcome words which speak of rest and reward and joy—"Bring of the fish which ye have now caught."

LXXVIII.

"I beheld, and lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by His fierce anger. For thus hath the Lord said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end."—JEREMIAH iv. 25-27.

AS I turn to my notes of "a tour in Palestine" taken in the spring of 1868, and read the pages which describe our ride from Beirut to Jaffa, I meet with continual references to the utter desolation of the whole coast, *e.g.*, "this fisherman was the only person we saw between Sidon and Surafend," &c. The solitude and desolation of the maritime plains of Syria must strike every traveller. Dean Stanley says, "There is one point of view in which this whole coast is specially remarkable. 'A mournful and solitary silence now prevails along the shore which once resounded with the world's debate.' This sentence, with which Gibbon solemnly closes his chapter on the Crusades, well sums up the general impression still left by the six days' ride from Beirut to Ascalon; mile after mile was often

traversed without meeting a soul." I was deeply impressed with this "mournful and solitary silence" as I rode along the coast of Phœnicia. The whole shore is strewn with debris, the sites of cities whose very names are now unknown. Dr Thomson counted the deserted sites of sixteen cities between Sidon and Tyre, a distance of not more than twenty miles.

" 'Tis still the same, where'er we tread
The wrecks of human power we see;
The marvels of all ages fled,
Left to decay and thee."

As journeying south we traversed the vale of Dor to the north of the noble plain of Sharon, we rode mile after mile without meeting a single person, and yet Dor was once teeming with people. The land is desolate; "the wayfaring man ceaseth." "And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her Sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her Sabbaths. As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your Sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it" (Lev. xxvi. 33-35).

As I again turn to my notes I read: "We were in the saddle early next morning, as we were within two hours of Cæsarea. We rode along the sandy beach, our number increased by two villagers, who

seemed only too thankful for our escort. Abid (our dragoman) seemed thoroughly frightened if any one of the party was lost to sight, even for a few minutes, behind the sandy hills to our left, or lingered a few seconds to gather shells. The whole region is infested with robbers, and seems to have as bad a character as the road from Jericho to Jerusalem." "The spoilers are come upon all high places through the wilderness. No flesh shall have peace" (Jer. xii. 12).

One of the peculiarities of the plain of Sharon is the large number of pools and marshes on its edge, caused by the accumulation of sand on the coast, which seems ever to be drifting higher and higher, and which prevents the outflow of the streams. This belt of sand which encroaches more and more upon the maritime plains of Syria, is most destructive in its progress, and certainly everywhere heightens the desolation of the scene. As we rode along the shore we found that we were approaching the ruins of Cæsarea by passing an aqueduct to our left, many parts of which were completely buried in the sand, which took the most fantastic forms, reminding one of drifts after a heavy fall of snow. We soon came upon extensive ruins close by the shore—some projecting far into the sea. A mediæval wall enclosed the site of the city. I quite sympathise with Dr Porter when he says, "In only a very few other cities of Palestine was I so deeply impressed, so strangely and powerfully excited, by

the *religio loci*. The profound silence, the utter desolation, the total absence of every sign of human life, left me alone as it were with the sacred associations and stirring memories of the past. The gate by which Peter entered was there; the ruins of the palace in which Paul preached were there; the ruins of the harbour in which he embarked were there; the massive fragments of Eusebius' church were there; the walls which the brave Crusaders built were there. Every great event in the sacred and civil history of the city was localised, and fancy grouped again the old actors on the old scenes."* Sandhills to the east hide the plain of Sharon from view. These hills, bare of everything but long wiry grass, have completely encircled Cæsarea, and give it an air of unspeakable desolation. So dreary was the scene, so impressive the silence, that even the very tones of one's voice were subdued as in the chamber of death. There was not a sign of life. The day being sultry, there was not even the moaning of the wind or the murmur of the waves—generally the only sounds here, except the cry of the jackal or some beast of prey. The very birds seemed exiled from the spot. "I beheld, and lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heaven were fled. I beheld, and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by His fierce anger. For thus hath the Lord said, The whole

* "The Giant Cities of Bashan," p. 234.

land shall be desolate." The magnificent city of Cæsarea, so sudden in its rise, so rapid in its decline, with its marble palaces, theatres and temples, is now a "ruin of ruins," a wreck on the shore. As we rode through the gate in the southern wall—the very gate, Porter imagines, through which Peter entered — and again turned and looked upon the city of Herod—a scene so singularly lonely and desolate, the ruins of a city once so magnificent—and then remembered the truths preached there by Peter, Philip, and Paul, and its connection with that faith into which we, like Cornelius, had been baptized, one could not but repeat the words quoted by Peter himself, "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flowers thereof falleth away ; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever " (1 Pet. i. 24, 25)

"Land of fair Palestine, where Jesus trod,
Thy ruins and thy relics tell of God ;
Thine everlasting hills with awe proclaim
The holy record of Jehovah's name ;
Thy gallant cities, crumbled into dust,
Pronounce the judgment of Jehovah just."

LXXIX.

"And the common people heard Him gladly."—MARK xii. 37.

SYDNEY SMITH, when speaking of the theological teaching of the last century and the drowsy attention of congregations, sarcastically inquires "whether sin was to be taken from man as Eve from Adam, by casting them into a deep slumber?" Thank God, a great change has passed since then over the preaching and teaching of ministers and Sunday-school teachers. When we turn to the Gospels we find that Christ was heard with the deepest interest. "Never man spake like this man," was the verdict even of His enemies. Ignorant, illiterate people, whom it is most difficult to teach, hung upon His lips: "The common people heard Him gladly." This popularity did not arise from pandering to their passions; there was no sacrifice of truth. Nay, His teaching constantly came into collision with national prejudices. Yet it was not merely His works, but His words that attracted the multitude. The Sermon on the Mount was not a short one, and yet the crowds who heard it were ready for a second.

Let us consider two points in the teaching of Jesus—1st. Its simplicity. 2d. Its adaptation.

1st. *Its simplicity.* Following the manner of Old Testament teaching, our Lord was *illustrative*. The whole theory of the tabernacle service was that of a series of object lessons. Just as in an infant-school we teach the minds of the very young by pictures, so God taught the infancy of the Church by type and symbol, long before its unripened faith could grasp abstract truth. The ceremonial law was simply a ladder by which Israel could climb to moral and spiritual truth, the scaffolding to be removed whenever the building was finished. The study of the word would tell Christ how God inspired His prophets to teach in all ages. Every spiritual idea is there clothed in some image borrowed from the lower world. Besides this, can we not imagine how earnestly Jesus must have studied the pages of nature? In everything He saw a Father's hand. The hills of His Galilean home were so many lesson books from which He learned the Father's power, wisdom, and love. What a storehouse of illustration His mind became! What habits of observation He acquired! Many a time, as the morning sun rose over the Eastern hills, must He have thought of His own mission, which was to disperse darkness, ignorance, and sin. Years roll on. It is early morning; He is in the temple. A poor woman charged with adultery is at His feet. His words of grace are dispelling the dark-

ness of sin from that poor fallen mind. The sun is rising over the Mount of Olives. The natural was to His mind the type of the spiritual, the visible of the invisible, the outward of the inward. "I am the Light of the world." How simple, how natural, how true! The parables of Christ are so many model lessons for our careful study. Christ thought of the ignorant, nay, Christ thought of children in all ages, when He gave His lessons to the crowds around Him, or to His immediate disciples, as well as when He took them in His arms and blessed them. His mind was so magnetised that it drew to itself everything that would serve His purpose. An accident, the falling of a tower in Siloam, is not allowed to pass by unimproved. From the commonest feature of life He draws the most sublime lessons. A patch on a garment, a platter clean on the outside, a lighted candle, the salt, the leaven, are all brought into His lessons. The thief entering the house at midnight, women grinding at a mill, children sleeping with their father while the importunate neighbour knocks at the door, or playing in the market-place at a wedding or a funeral. Domestic joys and sorrows all convey spiritual lessons, and thus the common water of every-day life is changed by the Master into the "good wine" of gospel instruction. He takes us to the fields, the mountains, and the flowers. Here is the secret of the perpetual freshness of Christ's teaching. The lessons never lose the dew of their youth. They are so

illustrative and clear, that the weakest capacity can grasp them, and yet so deep, that they meet the requirements of the most thoughtful mind; nay, the very clearness and simplicity of the lesson may sometimes deceive us as to its depth. It has often been said, "There is all the difference in the world between the preaching of foolishness and the foolishness of preaching," so we may say teaching simply is not simply teaching. I well remember a rock, near Port Soderic in the Isle of Man, from which as a boy I have looked down into the clear waters of the bay. I could see every crab, and shell, and weed, on the sand below. How shallow I thought it! The very clearness of the water deceived me. Time rolled on, and again I looked from the same rock. My eye meanwhile had learned better to calculate distance. How clear still, but how deep! Yet even then I was astonished when told its true depth. Who has fathomed or ever will fathom the words of Christ? May I venture to impress upon any reader of these pages who is engaged in teaching, the deep importance of imitating the great Master in our mode of imparting divine knowledge. Study the parables, miracles, and narratives of the Bible. Illustrate its truth and doctrines. Study nature itself. Have your eyes open and observe, not to talk learnedly, but to teach simply. You will not have sleepy scholars. They will hear you gladly. I mention illustrations from nature and daily life specially, because, when the child grows up, the

object lesson still remains. The illustration is not like a piece of bread eaten, but like the seed reproducing itself and supplying food after many days.

2nd. Its *adaptation*. Teaching may be of the simplest kind, and yet not adapted to the occasion. A man might preach in the tropics of forgiveness of sin, and illustrate it by the text, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be *white as snow*." Striking as the illustration might be to a man who lived in more northern regions, it would be obscure enough in the case in point. Let us note then the *adaptation* of our Lord's teaching. He did not teach the rich young man as He taught the woman of Samaria, nor did He teach in Galilee as He taught in Jerusalem, nor at the end of His ministry as when He first called His disciples. Take a remarkable instance of this adaptation of Christ's teaching to the circumstances of His hearers. We read in the 13th of Matthew that "great multitudes were gathered together unto Him." Where was He teaching? By the Sea of Galilee. Speaking generally, the multitudes consisted of three classes—husbandmen from the plains and hills, fishermen from the lake, tradesmen, merchants, shopkeepers, and pedlars from the neighbouring towns. The teaching is of the most solemn character, but illustrative; "without a parable spake he not unto them." Mark the adaptation! The parable of the draw-net for the fisherman, of the sower, tares and mustard-seed for the agricultural

labourer, of the pearl and hidden treasure for the tradesman. All could understand the illustrations, but each class had its special point of interest. Would that at the end of our day's teaching, when we ask our scholars, as Christ did His, "Have ye understood all these things?" (ver. 51), they could answer "Yea." "Then He said unto them" (and the connection is most striking), "Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old" (ver. 52). The "common people" would hear ministers more "gladly" if, to use the words of Robert Hall, they not only told their hearers "what things *are*," but what they are *like*."

LXXX.

“How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?”—JEREMIAH xiv. 5.

THERE is an impression in many minds that there exists an analogy between this annual rise of the Jordan and the periodic inundations of the Nile and Euphrates. Probably this idea has had its origin from a verse in Ecclesiasticus xxiv. 26, “He maketh the understanding to abound like Euphrates, and as Jordan in the time of harvest;” and from the fact that the Jordan is the river of Palestine, just as the Nile is the river of Egypt, as both are subject to a periodic increase of waters, many persons have formed an exaggerated idea of the swelling of the Jordan. They first associate the two rivers together on account of their similar habits of inundating their banks, and then extend the analogy to the amount of the overflow. As the average depth of the ravine through which the Jordan flows ranges from fifty to sixty feet, the reader will at once see that if the river is to rise to the level of the adjacent plain, the flood must be enormous, which is very far from the case. Whilst the “waters of Sihor” (Jer. ii. 18) carry fertility over the land, and the rivers of Assyria are “strong and many” (Isa. viii. 7); the “waters of Israel,” as

we have already observed, uninfluence even in their "swelling" the district through which they flow. But I am at once reminded by the reader of the words, "For Jordan overfloweth its banks all the time of harvest" (Josh. iii. 15). We answer, our English version does not give the meaning of the Hebrew original, which is, "was full up to all its banks,"* *i.e.*, flows with full banks, or is brimful. And even then it only refers to the banks at the bottom of the glen. To understand the passage just quoted, as well as 1 Chron. xii. 15, &c., "When it," viz., the Jordan, "had overflowed all his banks," we must remember that this river has two, and in some places even three sets of banks. As I am anxious that every reader should understand this important and peculiar characteristic of the Jordan, let me illustrate the point by asking you to recall to mind some tidal river at home, such as the Arun below Arundel. Standing on the margin of the meadow above (the fissure through which the river flows being deep), when the tide is out, you look down upon two sets of banks. There is the ordinary stream flowing low down between its immediate or first set of banks. After that you have a wide bed of mud and marsh on each side. As the tide comes in, it first of all rises to the level of the ordinary or first set of

* The Septuagint and Vulgate convey the same meaning. Sept. "Ὁ δὲ Ἰορδάνης ἐπλήρουτο καθ' ὅλην τὴν κρηπίδα αὐτοῦ ὥσπερ ἡμέραι θερισμοῦ πυρῶν." Vulg. "Jordanis autem ripas alvea sui tempore messis impleverat."

banks of the river; then it gradually covers the bed of mud and marsh, and flows between the outer or second set of banks on each side. To use the Scripture phrase with reference to the Jordan, it is "full up to all its banks." Instead of this tract of mud on each side of the stream, plant a thick jungle of willows and oleanders, of canes and tamarisks, and we have all that we require for the case in point. As the river rises, it covers the bed or bank on which the jungle grows; and as its thickets afford a ready covert for the wild boar, the wolf, and other animals, and in ancient times for the lion, the rising waters drive them from their lair into the plain above, or into the adjacent mountains. "Behold, he shall *come up* (note the accuracy), like a lion from the swelling of the Jordan, against the habitation of the strong" (Jer. xlix. 19, l. 44). While many persons have formed an exaggerated idea of the amount of the swelling of the Jordan, others, I think, have fallen into a mistake on the other side, who would take as a general habit of the river the statement of Mr Williams in Dr Smith's "Dictionary of Geography," where he says that "he visited the river at all seasons of the year, but he never witnessed an overflow; nor were the Bedouins who inhabit its banks acquainted with the phenomenon." Dr Thomson says, "I found the river full to the brim, and saw evidence in abundance that it had overflowed its banks very recently."* I quote this sentence of Dr

* "The Land and the Book," p. 69.

Thomson because he is describing a visit which he paid to the river on the 1st of April. We visited the Jordan on the 2d of April, and at the same place. The river was full, and there were unmistakable tokens of a higher swelling on every side. Deposits of chalk and sand were left among the reeds and grass; the leaves of the low-bending branches of the trees had been left almost white as the milky waters had retired; and, like Lieutenant Lynch, who is describing a spot on the Jordan which he saw on the 14th of April, we saw "sedge and drift-wood among the branches of the overhanging trees." *

In my brother's letter home, dated on the evening of the day of our visit, I find the following sentence, "My idea about the walking-sticks was soon dispelled: I could not get one to serve me, as the knee-deep swamps cut off all approach to the tempting branches." It is true that an exceptional amount of rain fell in Palestine in the winter of 1867 and the spring of 1868, which probably influenced to some extent the height of the swelling. Doubtless owing to the clearing away

* "The river flows in a valley about a quarter of a mile in breadth, which is considerably lower than the rest of the plain of Ghor; this lower valley is covered with high trees and a luxuriant verdure. . . . The river, where we passed it, was about 80 paces broad, and about 3 feet deep; this, it must be recollected, was in the midst of summer. In the winter it inundates the plain in the bottom of the narrow valley, but never rises to the upper plain of the Ghor, which is at least 40 feet above the level of the river."—Burckhardt, "Syria and the Holy Land," pp. 344. 345.

of the forests in the Lebanon, a less fall of rain and snow, and the deepening of the channel of the river from the rapidity of the current, the rise is slightly earlier, and not so apparent as in days of old. Maundrell, who visited the Jordan on the 30th of March 1697, and who happened to have the same experience as Mr Williams, quaintly adds: "It seems to have forgot its ancient greatness." * The statement that Jordan is brimful "all the time of harvest" is still true. Dr Robinson, after stating his belief that the ancient rise of the river has been greatly exaggerated, says: "Then, as now, there was a slight annual rise of the river, which caused it to flow at this season with full banks, and sometimes to spread its waters even over the immediate banks of its channel where they are lowest, so as in some places to fill the low tract around with trees and vegetation along its sides." † Dr Thomson, who has lived in the country for more than 40 years, says that the overflow of the Jordan is "as literally true now as when Joshua led the ransomed tribes into Canaan."

* "Early Travels in Palestine," p. 481.

† "Biblical Researches in Palestine," vol. i. p. 541.

LXXXI.

"Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest."—
JOSHUA iii. 15.

OBJECTIONS have been raised by sceptics against the accuracy of this statement. They say that Jordan does not overflow its banks at all, and if it did the rise would not take place at the time stated in the text, neither would it continue "*all* the time of harvest." The first statement is absolutely untrue, and did space allow, I could give, apart from my own testimony, passage after passage from the writings of well-known travellers who have themselves witnessed the "swelling of the Jordan."* "With reference to the 'time of harvest,' we know," says the objector, "from the Divine narrative that the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan 'on the tenth day of the first month' (Josh. iv. 19), *i.e.*, four days before the passover (Easter), 'and the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month, at even, in the plains of Jericho' (Josh. v. 10). "Now, harvest

* See paper on Jer. xiv. 5.

does not commence in Palestine until a full month later than the time stated by Joshua." Quite true, we answer; at Easter you will find the fields, even at Bethlehem, a few miles away, quite green; but you forget that the plain of Jericho is depressed thirteen hundred feet below the level of the sea, that it enjoys a tropical heat, and that the harvest is reaped at Jericho weeks before the sickle is "put in" in other parts of Palestine. An intimate acquaintance with the land removes the seeming mistake of the Book—*namely, the very specialty of the fact stated, as in a thousand other instances, confirms its accuracy.* Van de Velde writes, "How the Jordan overflows its banks all the time of the harvest, we saw by the trees under the shadow of which we rested. The harvest time is now past in the fields of Jericho. The waters accordingly have now subsided. The harvest in the southern part of the plain comes on as early as April; more to the north it comes in May, as the summer season falls later in proportion as the level of the ground rises."* Dr Robinson, who is so justly noted for his accurate observation, after saying that the wheat harvest was nearly completed at Jericho, though three days before "we had left the wheat green upon the fields around Hebron and Carmel," adds, "My companion had visited the place a few years before, and found the barley there fully

* "Syria and Palestine," vol. ii. pp. 272, 273.

gathered and threshed on the 22d of April."* "I visited the scene of this miracle," *i.e.*, of the passage of Israel, says Dr Thomson, "on the 1st of April, and found barley harvest about Jericho already ended." Not to multiply quotations, let us at once turn to the last objection brought against this verse,—viz., that the Bible says that the "swelling" lasted "*all* the time of harvest." As the barley harvest commences some weeks before wheat harvest, &c., the text states that the river, instead of rapidly falling, after the manner of other rivers which are subject to periodic rises, continues to flow with a swollen current for several weeks. I meet this objection, because the answer at the same time combats another, which is as follows:—"How is it that the rising of the Jordan does not take place till after the snows of Hermon have long melted, and until after the rainy season is almost entirely over—why should it overflow its banks in spring '*all the time of harvest?*'" Whilst not attaching too much importance to the point, we answer, these peculiarities of the Jordan, noted in the Bible, only serve to confirm the minute accuracy of its statements. The phenomena are at once explained by a knowledge of the configuration of the country through which the river flows. The Jordan has three distinct stages: the first ending in the Lake of Hûleh, the "Waters of Merom," of Josh. xi. 5; the second in the "Sea of Galilee,"

* Robinson's "Biblical Researches," vol. i. p. 551.

called by St John the "Sea of Galilee, which is Tiberias," to distinguish it from the Sea of Merom, which was also in Galilee; the third stage, the Jordan of the Bible, ending in the Dead Sea. As this portion of the river, *i.e.*, the stage from the Sea of Tiberias to its final home in Bahr Lout, receives no tributaries beyond the small torrents of the Yarmūk and the Zerka, it is evident that there can be little swelling in the rainy season from these influences, and that it must originate in the upper part of its course. A peculiarity of the Jordan is, that it is fed from permanent springs, and is almost entirely independent of tributaries. The melted snows and rain first fill up the secret chambers of Lebanon, which supply the fountain-streams which are the sources of the river. Then the volume of water is delayed, as the basins of the two lakes of Merom and Gennesaret are capable of great extension, and have to be filled before the latter pours forth the swollen waters of the full river. This fact not only explains the delay of the overflow, but also its steady continuance. To use the expression of Dr Robinson, these lakes act as "great regulators, which control the violence of the Jordan," and hence the stream which pours from them flows with an equalised and regulated current.

LXXXII.

“And when the Queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built . . . and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord ; there was no more spirit in her.”—2 CHRONICLES ix. 3, 4.

THE walls of the Haram area ; *i.e.*, the area which encloses the Mosque of Omar, are built upon the substructures of the temple. Even above the present surface of the ground very many noble courses of the ancient stones are still to be seen. Every reader has seen engravings or photographs of the Jews' Wailing Place by the west wall, with its old bevelled stones, and every traveller has looked with the deepest interest on similar stones at the south-east corner. There are fifteen courses of huge bevelled stones standing where they stood when our Lord looked upon them, and the disciples exclaimed, “Master, see what *manner of stones*, and what buildings are here” (Mark xiii. 1).^{*} But little did travellers

^{*} “From an examination of this south wall, in nine different places, there appears to be no doubt that the whole of the stones below the present surface are bevelled, and that they are *in situ*” (“Palestine Exploration Quarterly Statement,” No. III. p. 124). Our Lord's words, “There shall not be one stone upon another

imagine, until lately, that at a depth of ninety feet beneath the ground on which they stood, hidden by the rubbish of ages, the lowest course of stones lay upon the rock. Here were actually found the chippings of the rock when bevelled to receive its burden. (The stones were prepared beforehand.) A shaft sunk at the south-west end to the depth of eighty-seven feet, led to the discovery of the true bed of the Tyropæon, and informed us that the present Haram wall is built on the west side of that valley, and not on the east, as before imagined. If the accumulated *débris* could be removed, ninety feet of wall would be laid bare; *i.e.*, the south Haram wall would rise proudly 150 feet above the Hinnom Valley, by far the noblest specimen of mural architecture which the world has ever seen. Add to this that upon the temple wall ran the cloister of Herod, the Stoa Basilica, 50 feet high, and we are lost in our conceptions of masonry with which no parallel is to be found.

At the south-east corner of the Haram wall on the lowest course, where the foundations of the temple lie on the living rock, a discovery has been made of the deepest interest—writings or inscriptions painted and cut on the stones. The late M. Deutsch, an eminent Semitic scholar, has decided that these marks are “partly letters, partly numerals, and partly special masons’ or quarry signs;” that they “were on the stones

that shall not be thrown down,” refer to the temple itself, not to the enclosure.

when they were first laid in their present places ;” and that, above all “they are Phœnician.” If M. Deutsch’s theory be the true one, as doubtless it is, these marks prove that the stones form a part of Solomon’s temple. The reader will remember that Phœnician workmen were supplied to Solomon by Hiram, king of Tyre.

My object, however, in this paper is to speak of the remarkable investigations which have been made in connection with “Robinson’s Arch.” If no other results had issued from the efforts of the Exploration Fund than the discovery of which I am about to speak, its promoters would have been amply rewarded. No traveller ever thought of leaving Jerusalem without having visited the western wall of the Haram, at the south part of which is the Jews’ Wailing Place, where the outcasts of Israel for centuries have been permitted to bathe with their tears the hallowed stones of the temple of their fathers. In this neighbourhood are the largest stones on which the Jewish bevel is most distinctly seen. One of these colossal blocks is thirty-nine feet long. Among these huge pieces of masonry, thirty-nine feet from the angle of the south-west wall, are three courses of stones extending fifty-two feet, and projecting from its surface. Dr Robinson, to whom we are so deeply indebted for researches in Palestine thirty years ago, came to the conclusion that they formed the segment of an arch, corresponding in position to a bridge, which according to Josephus,

connected the temple with the "upper city." This theory has proved to be correct. Some years ago, Lieut. Warren, after driving a gallery eastward along the rock from the bottom of a shaft, came upon three courses of stones of a peculiar construction, which proved to be the lowest tiers of the western pier of the old arch. The pier is of the same breadth with the segment on the Haram wall. Dr Robinson's conclusion was, however, to have a still more interesting corroboration. Our explorer found a limestone pavement running from the base of the pier to the Haram wall, and upon this pavement he found the voussoirs (the wedge-shaped arch-stones) of the bridge, lying in rows north and south, just as they had been cast down, most probably at the siege of Titus. The superjacent fifty feet of *débris* had of course accumulated since that period. The discovery was soon noised abroad in the city, and even the old rabbis seemed roused to deep interest. One day some Jews were seated round the top of the shaft wistfully watching Lieut. Warren taking down some English travellers. He asked them to join the party, but they refused, as it was their Sabbath. They were reminded that they could take a Sabbath day's journey underground as well as above ground. Then one of them descended. The discovery did not stop here. Lieut. Warren sank a shaft through the pavement to the depth of twenty-three feet, when he met with a conduit cut out of the solid

rock, and running north-west along the bed of the Tyropœon. Across this watercourse were found the voussoirs of another, and therefore still more ancient, arch. We are told by Josephus that when Aristobulus was worsted by Pompey, who besieged Jerusalem twenty years before Herod was made king, "he retired into the temple, and cut off the communication between the temple and the city by breaking down the bridge that joined them together" ("Wars of the Jews," vii. 2). These stones are probably the remains of this arch. We can imagine the terrible force with which these huge stones must have fallen, from the fact of their breaking through the roof of the aqueduct, where they rest on the solid rock on each side. These voussoirs also tell us that there could not have been much earth over the canal at the time, otherwise the force of the fall would have been deadened. As the lowest tier of the stones of the temple wall rests upon the rock near this conduit, we can realise in some measure its immense proportions.

Some idea may be formed of its colossal grandeur, when I state that the west wall of the temple area would rise from the Tyropœon valley a gigantic panelled wall, equal in height to the transept of the Crystal Palace, and in length equal to its original nave. Such a sight as this may well have so astonished the Queen of Sheba, that "there was no more spirit in her." The bridge itself was no less striking a work of art, as it

spanned the deep valley beneath. The ascent by which Solomon "went up to the house of the Lord" may have been, I imagine, the massive flight of steps which, we know, rose up on each side of the valley, and connected the "upper city," where Solomon had his palace, with the temple. I must not occupy more space in this paper by speaking of some discoveries at the north-east of the Haram enclosure of a most important character. I refer the reader to the papers of the "Palestine Exploration Fund." I cannot say how earnestly I wish to enlist the sympathies of the Christian reader with this noble work. Everywhere the stones are crying out and attesting the truth of the Divine utterances. I do not refer to the text at the head of this paper so much as to the general investigations of the Palestine Exploration, when I say that witnesses to the accuracy of the historical statements of Scripture, whose voices have long been silent in the dust, are now being called to testify to the verity of revelation. He who "is touched with the feeling of our infirmities," seems, in the order of His Providence, to have reserved, for the age when most needed, documents which shall re-establish and confirm the faith of many a sincere and humble spirit that is groping his way to the light; though harassed, it may be, by the doubts and uncertainties which it would gladly have dispelled. To the wilful unbeliever evidences such as these are of no avail—he will "not be persuaded

though one rose from the dead." Let us seek to interest others in this subject. In the economy or grace the human is ever the pathway to the Divine ; and many a one who has been drawn to the study of the Bible from an interest in its historical or topographical details, has been brought into contact with the Divine mind, and led to say, "Come, see a *Book* which told me all that ever I did : is not this the *Word of God* ? "

LXXXIII.

"Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together."—
PSALM cxxii. 3.

WE must obtain a clear and definite idea of the position of Jerusalem if we are to understand the force of the simile used by the Psalmist. If we glance at any ordinary map of Syria, we see that the physical formation of Palestine is very simple in its general outlines. A mountain chain runs down the land—a dorsal ridge—from north to south. "The Lebanon range on the north is intersected by the gorge of the Leontes. To the south of this river the ridge increases in breadth, but decreases in altitude, until it terminates in the wooded cone of Tabor and the rocky hills that encircle Nazareth. The plain of Esdraelon, through which the Kishon flows, separates the Lebanon from its natural continuation, the range of Carmel and the mountains of Samaria. To these succeeds the "hill country of Judea," stretching in a wide ridge to the Desert of Tih, which forms the southern boundary of the Land of Promise. This southern section of the mountain chain between Esdraelon and Beersheba is wider,

lower, and less regular, than any of the others. Its general elevation, at Ebal and Gerizim, Olivet and Hebron, ranges only from 2400 to 2700 feet.* I ask the attention of the reader to this "southern section." Receding from the Mediterranean it leaves at its base the broad plains of Sharon and Philistia on the west; on the east the range descends more precipitately to the deep chasm of the Jordan valley and the Dead Sea. The summit of this broad mountain ridge is a forest of grey barren limestone hills. In the very heart of these hills, on the watershed between the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean, is a tableland (tableland, *i.e.*, in comparison with the neighbouring country). In the midst of this plateau, if you approached Jerusalem by the road from Gibeon, you would see a gentle depression running in an easterly direction, and to the west of this depression, a shallow basin forming the commencement of another wady or valley which, like the first, runs eastward, but only for half the distance (*i.e.*, the two valleys, for a time, run parallel to each other). As our eyes follow the northern valley, we see that after continuing in an easterly direction for a mile and a half, it suddenly curves to the south, falls rapidly, and becomes a deep, narrow ravine. This is the valley of the Kidron (2 Sam. xv. 23), commonly called the valley of Jehoshaphat. The second valley (*i.e.*, the westerly one), after running

* Introduction to Murray's "Handbook for Travellers in Syria and Palestine," vol. i. p. 12.

three-quarters of a mile east by south, makes a sudden sweep southward, until, after three-quarters of a mile, its bed gradually becomes less shallow, it meets with a rocky hillside, when it again takes a course eastward, when it becomes deep, narrow, and precipitous. After half a mile it joins the Kidron valley. This is the valley of Hinnom (Josh. xv. 8). The confluence of the two valleys flows off as one in a south-east direction to the Dead Sea. The broad and elevated ridge or promontory between the fork of these two valleys of Kidron and Hinnom, is the platform on which stands Jerusalem, called by the Arabs el-Kuds (*i.e.*, the "holy"). This ridge is itself divided, but of these divisions I need not now speak. The position of Jerusalem is thus unique: a mountain fortress, cut off from the surrounding district on the west, the south, and the east, by a deep natural moat or fosse; whilst on the north, or to speak more correctly, on the north-west, the tract of level ground between the commencement of the two valleys (the isthmus of the peninsula) forms, to carry out the idea, a drawbridge or means of communication with the whole country, and also space for the extension of the city whenever it might be required—as we know was the case in its later history. Dean Stanley, speaking of these "deep ravines which separate Jerusalem from the rocky plateau of which it forms a part," observes that they must not only have acted as its natural defence, but must also have determined

its natural boundaries. The city, wherever else it spread, could never overleap the valley of the Kedron, or of Hinnom " ("Sinai and Palestine," p. 173). In other words, the steep declivities of these two valleys which encompass Jerusalem must have strictly defined the limits of the city; hence the words of the Psalmist, "Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together." The whole city must lie on the rocky platform, and could not extend beyond. On this account Josephus describes the city as "one" and "entire," *i.e.*, the houses were closely joined together. That there was uniformity, we gather from Sol. Song vi. 4. The Church's beauty is there said to be "comely as Jerusalem," the word "comely" being the term that implies uniformity and symmetry. "Beautiful for situation is Mount Zion! the joy of the whole land! the sides of the north! the city of the great King!" (Ps. xlviii. 2). Jerusalem was a type of the Church of Christ (Isa. xl. 2, lii. 1; Gal. iv. 25, 26; Heb. xii. 22; Rev. xxi. 2). The contiguity of the houses, and the uniformity of the streets, implied in the expression built "as a city that is compact together," is a striking picture of the unity of the one Church of Christ, built on the same foundation, closely joined to the same head, Christ, its members strictly united one to another like "a building fitly framed together," or like a human body that is "fitly joined together and

compacted by that which every joint supplieth."
"All the members being set in their proper
places, in a just symmetry with, and subserviency
to each other"* (Eph. ii. 20, 21, iv. 16).

* Dr Gill's Exposition of Solomon's Song.

LXXXIV.

'And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.'—REVELATION xvi. 16.

AS the traveller stands on the terrace at the east end of the ridge of Carmel, the scene of Elijah's sacrifice, he sees lying stretched at his feet the plain of Esdraelon, now called Merg' Ibn' Amer. This is the "Plain of Megiddo," or the "Valley of Jezreel" of Bible history, described, with its offshoots, by Joshua, as the "plains south of Chinneroth" (xi. 2). Its all but unbroken expanse seems like an inland sea drained by some marvel of human labour. This idea was suggested to my mind by the narrow passage or defile through which the Kishon enters into the Plain of Acre. A village is left here and there on the slopes of the surrounding hills. On the occasion of my first visit the brown surface of the plain was a scene of complete desolation.

Considering the position of Esdraelon, the reader can well understand the plain being the battle-field of Palestine. Never have I enjoyed any human composition more than the perusal of Stanley's chapter on the Plain of Esdraelon, when

I read it on the Muhrahkah, as, with its vivid word-painting, it recalled the history of the past. (The illustration of the plain of Stirling, "the battle-field of Scotland, from its position at the opening of the Highlands, and in like manner the scene of almost all the decisive battles of Scottish history," is most apt, and would naturally occur to any one familiar with the scenery and history of the two plains.) Here the Lord delivered Sisera into the hands of Barak when the kings of Canaan fought "in Taanach" (the name of the village is still preserved), "by the waters of Megiddo;" when, driven by the Israelites to the lower part of the plain, their strength was "trodden down," and they perished in the Kishon (Judges v. 19-21). Here, too, was the scene of the victory over the Midianites, when Gideon's trusty three hundred discomfited a host compared to the grasshoppers for multitude. But the plain was the scene not only of two great victories, but also of two great defeats: the one when the Philistines invaded the land and "the beauty of Israel was slain upon the high places of Gilboa;" the second in the last days of the Jewish monarchy, when Josiah fell at the battle of Megiddo, pierced by an Egyptian arrow, and the mourning of that day became a proverb in Israel, for "all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah" (2 Chron. xxxv. 24). The spot where he fell seems to have been called Hadad-rimmon. The lamentations of the Jews for the king suggested to the prophet a

picture of that mourning when a "spirit of grace and supplication" shall be poured upon "the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced. . . . In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, *as the mourning of Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddon*" (Zech. xii. 11). Here, hard by Aphez, Ahab conquered Benhadad, and across this plain "marched the Assyrian hordes to the final destruction of Jerusalem." In later days, from the Proconsul Gabinius and the Emperor Vespasian to the time of Napoleon, Esdraelon has been the scene of many a deadly struggle. Remembering this fact, especially, that this plain of Megiddo was so often the scene of conflict between the Israelites and the enemies of God's people, we can understand why the Apostle John, when speaking of "the battle of that great day of God Almighty," gathers the opposing hosts of good and evil, in prophetic vision, "to a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon," *i.e.*, "the city of Megiddo" (Rev. xvi. 16). May it not be that the bow of Antichrist shall be literally broken in the valley of Jezreel?

LXXXV.

“And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee.”—RUTH ii. 4.

IN no part of Palestine are you reminded more of the unchangeable habits of the East, than among the hills of Judah. You may see men during the barley-harvest, on the numerous threshing-floors, winnowing the grain by tossing it with a fork against the wind, as in the days of David (Ps. i. 4), or sleeping by the grain to guard it from thieves (1 Sam. xxiii. 1), as when Boaz laid himself down at night “at the end of the heap of corn” (Ruth iii. 7). I was more completely taken back to Bible days at Bethlehem than in any other part of Judah. The hours spent there stand out as among the happiest of our sojourn in Palestine. I looked down from the monastery upon the fields where were “shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night,” and where the angelic host chaunted their chorus of praise, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.” For a time, thoughts of Jacob and Rachel, of Ruth and Boaz, of Samuel and David, were all lost in the remembrance that this was the birthplace of Immanuel. “Thou,

Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" * (Micah v. 2). As we descended from the convent into the plain below, and noted each feature of the landscape, fancy could revel without the restraint of uncertainty. Along this path Elimelech and Naomi, Mahlon and Chilion, travelled on their way to Moab, and our eyes rested on the ramparts of the purple hills which bounded the horizon to the south-east. These hills of Moab seemed like old friends. We had hardly lost sight of them for weeks, and again they reminded us of Moses and Balaam, of Pisgah and the "high places of Baal;" but our thoughts soon reverted to Naomi and her return from her sojourn in those distant hills—a widow, but not alone. The story of Ruth, who for the love of Jehovah and His aged servant had left her "country and her gods," came before us, as we stood in the corn-fields of Bethlehem, with a vividness and reality which time can never dim. Leaving the noble background of the picture, our eyes turned to the fields in the foreground. It

* The town lies at the end of a ridge, which runs almost due east and west, on a low double hill; and although the position, in a military point of view, is one of great strength, as commanding the surrounding valleys, yet, as the ridge is overtopped on all sides by higher summits, we may apply to it the words of Micah v. 2 as regards its situation, even apart from its size and the obscurity of the position which it occupied in Hebrew history.

was probably just such a day as this when Ruth saw them for the first time; for it was then spring, and the corn lands of Boaz would be green, just as now. We knew that in two or three weeks' time the sickle would be put into the barley, and the scene recorded in the book of Ruth would be enacted afresh,—the reapers, the mid-day rest, the parched corn (Ruth ii. 14), the groups of women returning home, their veils filled with the days' gleanings. As if to recall the scene more vividly, the man who stepped out of our path, placing his hand on his breast, with true Oriental courtesy saluted us with "Allah M'Akûm" (the Lord be with you); and if we had given the ordinary response of the district, it would have been no other than that of the reapers of Boaz, "The Lord bless thee."

I often thought of Ruth and her happy home when I saw the degraded state of many an Eastern woman. What a peculiar interest must be awakened in the mind of such an one when the Bible is first brought before her, and she discovers the position assigned to her sex by our Lord and His Apostles,—more than this, that two books in the Old Testament actually bear the names of women! Deeply interesting is the fact, that in the one case Ruth, who was a Gentile, married a Jew, and that in the other, Esther, who was a Jewess, married a Gentile! Does it not seem at least an illustration of the thought that it is through woman that the whole race of man is to be blessed?

LXXXVI.

"And he fenced it."—ISAIAH v. 2.

PROFESSOR BIRKS justly remarks in his Commentary on Isaiah, "The Lord, the owner of the vineyard, fenced it round, when he assigned the bounds of Israel's inheritance, Numbers xxxiv; Deut. ii., iii.; and by the terror of His mighty acts, under Moses and Joshua, restrained the heathen from assailing them." The group of tablets on the rocks of Nahr-el-Kelb, recording the passages of Assyrian and Egyptian armies, throws an interesting light on this text. One of these inscriptions verifies the proud boast of Sennacherib: "With the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof: and I will enter into the lodgings of his border, and into the forest of his Carmel" (2 Kings xix. 23). The wild and sea-girt pass beneath the rocks of Nahr-el-Kelb (the dog-river) was the gate into the "vineyard,"—the gate of southern Syria, and the northern boundary of the plain of

Phoenicia. The fact of the inroads of successive armies being considered worthy of such records suggests the thought—how completely Palestine was closed in from surrounding nations. The ranges of the Lebanon on the north formed a barrier no less than the “great and terrible wilderness” on the south; whilst the deep crevasse of the Jordan valley, and the desert beyond on the east, as effectually secluded the land as the Great Sea westward in the days when navigation was in its earliest infancy. This vine of the Lord’s planting was to be “fenced” in lest the “boar of the wood” should “waste it,” or the “wild beast of the field” should “devour it” (Ps. lxxx. 13). Thus in the wisdom of God were the people of Israel, with whom the truth was to be deposited, kept separate from all the people on the face of the earth, till the fulness of time came when the gospel was to be published to the ends of the earth. As God “fenced” in the country, so also the capital. Jerusalem was essentially a mountain city. Excepting from the south “the ascent is perpetual; and to the traveller approaching from the east or west, it must always have presented the appearance, beyond any other capital of the then known world—we may say, beyond any important city that has ever existed on the earth—of a *mountain city*; breathing, as compared with the sultry plains of Jordan, a mountain air; enthroned, as compared with Jericho or Damascus, Gaza or Tyre, on a moun-

tain fortress" (Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine," p. 170-1). This elevation of Jerusalem suggested constant allusions to the minds of the sacred writers; but I refer to it because I am anxious that the reader should grasp the idea of the thorough seclusion of the Holy City on this account. Whilst Jerusalem was virtually central to the people of the country, as the country itself was central to the then known world ("I have set Jerusalem in the midst of the nations and countries round about her," Ezek. v. 5), none the less was it true that, like Elijah in the cave of Horeb, the city had comparative immunity from the winds and earthquakes, the wars and tumults, that rent surrounding nations. The maritime plain below was the great commercial route of nations, the line of intercourse between Assyria and Egypt, the path over which mighty armies passed and repassed, the field in which they met in conflict, the scene of long-continued sieges; and yet Jerusalem, in its mountain security, almost unapproachable to large armies, except by the steep and precipitous pass of the Beth-horons, was not in the least affected. A passage from Bourriennes' "*Mémoires sur Napoléon*," quoted by the Rev. G. S. Drew, in his thoughtful and clever book, "*Scripture Lands in connection with their History*," is so singularly appropriate to the subject that I cannot but give it, although I venture to Anglicise it for some of my readers. "We were but about six leagues from Jerusalem" (*i.e.*, at Ramleh, in going along

the coast to Acre); "I asked the commander-in-chief if he did not wish to pass through this city, celebrated on so many accounts. 'Oh, as to that, no! Jerusalem is not within my line of operations. I will not have anything to do with *mountaineers in dangerous roads.*' . . . We had no intercourse with Jerusalem, which, therefore, on its part, *remained entirely in seclusion* during the war." * "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for evermore" (Ps. cxxv. 2).

* "Nous n'étions pource qu'à environ six lieues de Jérusalem; Je demandai au général-en-chef s'il n'aurait pas le désir de passer par cette ville célèbre sous tant de rapports. . . . 'Oh! pour cela non! Jérusalem n'est point dans ma ligne d'opération. Je ne veux pas avoir à *des montagnards dans des chemins difficiles.*' . . . Nous n'eûmes aucun rapport avec Jérusalem, qui, de son côté *resta étrangère à cette guerre.*"—Bourriennes' "Mémoires sur Napoléon," vol. i. p. 318, quoted by Drew, p. 340, footnote 57.

LXXXVII.

"Turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly."—2 PETER ii. 6.

IN no passage of Scripture is the submergence of the cities of the plain by water either stated or implied. "The Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. And lo, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace" (Gen. xix. 24, 25, 28). St Peter (2 Pet. ii. 6) speaks in accordance with the universal tenor of Scripture, when he describes the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as destroyed by fire, in contrast with the deluge of waters brought "upon the world of the ungodly;" and yet, one may turn to book after book, even of modern date, wherein this popular fallacy is retained. I quote the following passage from Dean Milman's "History of the Jews," because I received from it my earliest impressions of the

formation of the Dead Sea. The reader will find it quoted in Mr Grove's most exhaustive articles on "The Salt Sea" and "Sodom," in Smith's "Biblical Dictionary":—

"The valley of the Jordan, in which the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim were situated, was rich and highly cultivated. It is most probable that the river then flowed in a deep and uninterrupted channel down a regular descent, and discharged itself into the eastern gulf of the Red Sea. The cities stood on a soil broken and undermined with veins of bitumen and sulphur. These inflammable substances, set on fire by lightning, caused a terrible convulsion; the water-courses—both the river and the canals, by which the land was extensively irrigated—burst their banks; the cities, the walls of which were, perhaps, built from the combustible materials of the soil, were entirely swallowed up by the fiery inundation; and the whole valley, which had been compared to Paradise and the well-watered corn-fields of the Nile, became a dead and fetid lake." (2d edit. i. 15.)

The writer, though perpetuating a mistake (he wrote in 1830, before the discoveries of Schubert, &c.), doubtless gives us the medium of the Divine judgment, when he speaks of the inflammable material which abounds in the region of the Dead Sea. The fuel was laid in the natural elements of the district in its supplies of sulphur, asphalte, and bitumen; and it needed but the Divine hand—

“the fire and brimstone from heaven” *—to turn the cities “into ashes.” The question of the *site* of Sodom is one of much interest—one that has been discussed at great length by writers on Palestine. I believe myself that it lay at the north end of the Dead Sea.† Apart from other evidence of a very conclusive character, one single passage of Holy Writ settles the question for me. I refer to the scriptural account of the separation of Abram and Lot. We read—“And he (Abram) went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai. . . . And Lot lifted up his eyes, and *beheld all the plain of Jordan*, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the Garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar” (Gen. xiii. 3-10). “The indications of the sacred text,” says Dean Stanley, in his “Lectures on the Jewish Church,” “and the peculiar positions of the localities, enable us to fix the very spot where the patriarchs stood.” As the traveller of to-day looks down on the plain of Jordan and sees the rich tracts of verdure created by the streams which

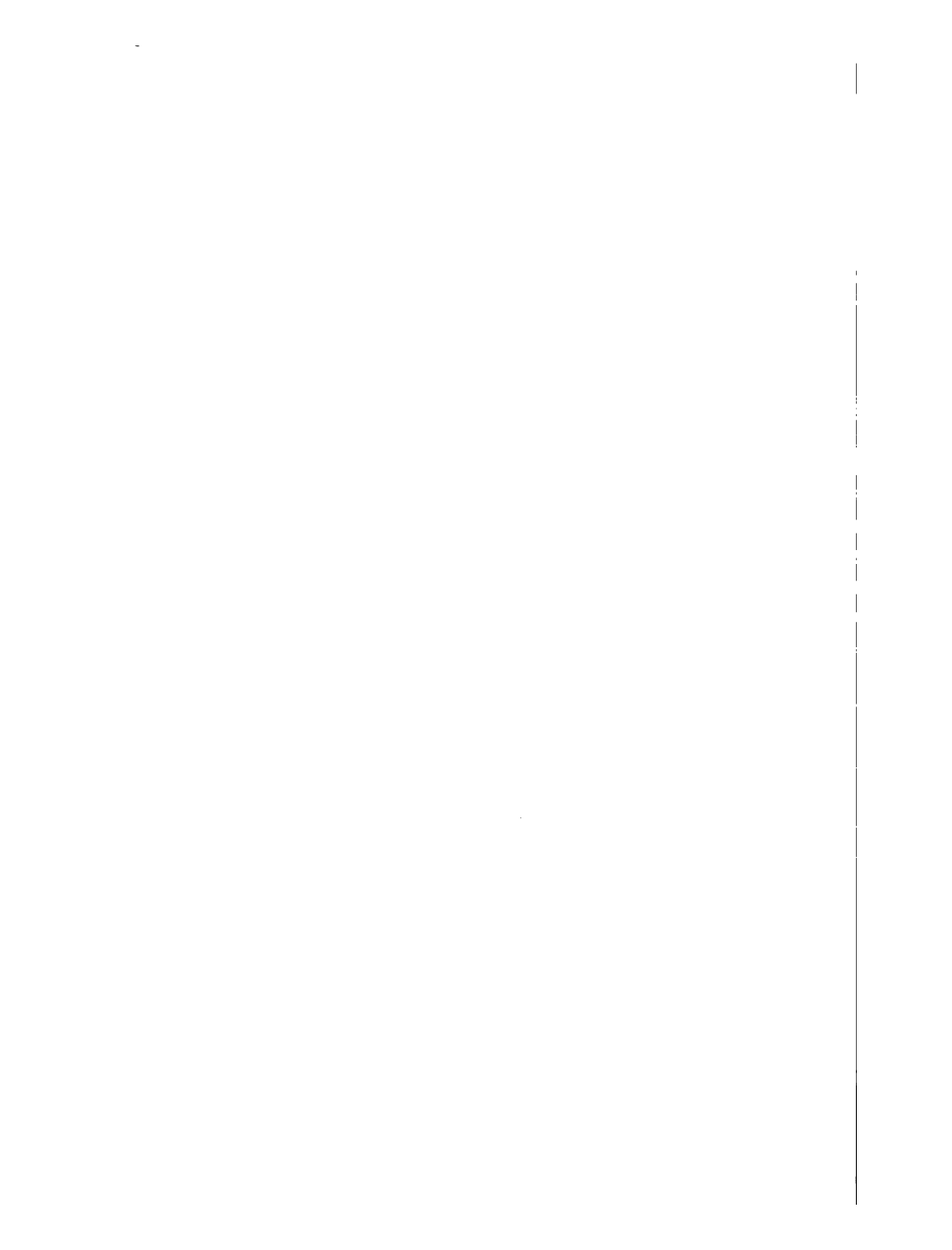
* If the “rained” (Gen. xix. 24) refers to “fire and brimstone” cast up from the crater of some volcano, which is very doubtful, it was still a Divine use of natural agencies, and therefore, a supernatural punishment.

† The reader who cares to pursue the subject will find an article written by me on the “Site of Sodom” in the *Sunday School Institute Magazine*, September 1871.

flow from the Ain Duk, the Ain Sultân, and other springs, and as he traces the course of the Wady Kelt by its line of green, he realises what a prospect must have presented itself to the eyes of Lot "before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah;" "beautiful and well watered as that garden of Eden, of which the fame still lingered within their own Chaldaean hills—as the valley of the Nile in which they had so lately sojourned." Lot's choice was soon made, "and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent towards Sodom." The question arises—Could Abram and Lot see the plain to the south of the Dead Sea, where Dr Robinson and others would locate Sodom? It is utterly impossible; *even if not too distant, it is entirely "shut out by intervening heights."*

I imagine that the exact spot in the plain where Sodom and Gomorrah stood will never be known. The very discussion of the question of the site of these cities shows how completely they have passed away. It is a remarkable fact, that the scene of one of the most awful events in the history of mankind should be a matter of speculation! Yet to my mind, as the haze which hangs over the surface of the Dead Sea has heightened the feeling of mystery with which the world has looked on its waters, so the very uncertainty as to the exact locality of "the cities of the plain" somehow deepens the awe with which we read the sacred narrative. Let us not, however, forget that although a haze of uncertainty may hide the site

of the catastrophe from our view, the event itself stands clearly out in the Divine record. Whilst our minds speculate on that which is uncertain, let not our hearts forget to lay hold of that which is certain and true. No event has been more divinely attested. The cry of warning against sin which rose from the fires of Sodom has been caught up by the voice of prophets and apostles, and, above all, by the Lord himself. Let us carry away in our hearts the Divine warning, which more than once fell from Divine lips, against those who abuse religious privileges: "I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee" (Matt. xi. 24).





LXXXVIII. ·

“Jerusalem is become heaps.”—MICAH iii. 12.

THERE are but few relics of old Jerusalem above ground. Interesting as the city must always be to the traveller, sparkling as it is with “epigrams in stone,” it is not from the buildings around him, but from the remains which lie far beneath, that he gains any true conception of the “city of the great King.” The Via Dolorosa, with its stations and legendary sites; the Scala Santa, the Chapel of Scourging, the place of the “Salve, Mater,” the arch of the Ecce Homo, the impression on the wall of the house against which the Saviour leaned when fainting under the Cross, &c., &c.; all so sacred to the Latin pilgrim—pain the heart of the thoughtful Christian, and he remembers with a feeling of relief, that the true Via Dolorosa is buried far below. Dr Rothe of Munich, some years ago, computed that the average depth of the superjacent *débris* was not less than forty feet, whilst the excavations of the last few years have shown that, in some places, it is at least ninety feet.

To explain this fact, I must remind the reader that the city has undergone many vicissitudes ; that "in considering the annals of the city of Jerusalem, nothing strikes one so forcibly as the number and severity of the sieges which it underwent." In the fifteen centuries which elapsed between the first recorded siege, when "the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire" (Judges i. 8), to its destruction by Titus, Jerusalem was besieged no fewer than seventeen times. Twice it was razed to the ground, and on two other occasions its walls were levelled. In this respect it stands without a parallel in any city ancient or modern.* Scarcely less chequered has been its history in the succeeding 1500 years. In the reign of Hadrian every trace of the ancient city was obliterated, and the very name of Jerusalem was for a time forgotten. It was demolished by Persian hosts ; it was subjected to Khalif and Fatimite conquerors ; it was besieged by Crusaders and Turks. Each inundation of violence has left its deposit ; the virgin site is covered by the strata of successive cities. Almost every shaft sunk into this precious mine has brought to light some treasure of "fossil history." How rapidly this deposit thickens, may be gathered from a fact stated by Mr Drew in the appendix to his "Scripture lands," reprinted from an article in the *Christian*

* Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible."

Observer, and of the accuracy of which any traveller may judge for himself, that "underneath the church and convent of St John, which is just opposite the chief European hotel, and twenty-five feet below its present ground level (which is the same as that of the adjacent street), is another church of the date of the Crusades, whereof the windows in the walls and opposite the doors show that it was then used and open for worship on the general level of the city ground. The twenty-five feet of *débris* under which it is now buried is the accumulation of the last 700 years." Jerusalem has literally "become heaps."

LXXXIX.

"By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation,
which sing among the branches."—PSALM civ. 12.

NEVER shall I forget my first ride from Riha to Ain Sultân; our way lay right across the oasis evoked by its waters. It may be that the contrast with the arid desert of the previous day heightened my feelings of present enjoyment, but certainly they echoed the words of Josephus,—a "Divine region." At one time I was reminded of Epping Forest, and then of a neglected orchard with an undergrowth of luxuriant vegetation. Large thorn bushes and forest shrubs dotted the plain on every side. In some places the ground was carpeted with flowers, and every bush seemed vocal with the cheerful twittering of birds. I use the word "twittering," because I do not think that I ever heard a decided warble during the whole time I was in Syria. Coleridge speaks of the "merry nightingale,"

"That crowds, and hurries, and precipitates
With fast, thick warble, his delicious notes."

The song of my little Syrian friends seemed to

consist of a series of cheerful chirps. Other travellers have been more fortunate. Bonar speaks of the note of the cuckoo; Dr Robinson of the song of the nightingale. Lord Lindsay tells us of the delight of an evening spent by the Jordan, "the river murmuring along, and the nightingales singing from the trees." Canon Tristram, describing the scenery near Tell-el-Kady, says that "the bulbul and nightingale vied in rival song in the branches above, audible over the noise of the torrent below." In the face of these statements it seems to me remarkable, considering the innumerable references to nature in the Bible, that the singing of birds is only mentioned three times. In the well-known passage which so exquisitely depicts a Syrian spring, we read "the time of the singing of birds is come" (Song of Solomon ii. 12). The Psalmist, in speaking of the mighty power and wondrous Providence of God, mentions the springs in "the valleys, which run among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field; the wild asses quench their thirst. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches" (Ps. civ. 10-12). Canon Tristram commenting on this passage, says, that it may refer specially to the "bulbul and nightingale, both of which throng the trees that fringe the Jordan and abound in all the wooded valleys, filling the air in early spring with the rich cadence of their notes."* The third instance is Eccl. xii. 4: "He"

* "The Natural History of the Bible," p. 161. This book

—i.e., the old man—"shall rise up at the voice of the bird." Whilst speaking of birds I may mention that I listened that morning for the cooing of the doves, but in vain. I knew that the region of Ain Sultân was one of its most favourite resorts, and that thousands of them crowd the thickets around Jericho. We were a few days too early. I refer to the turtle-dove, because of its connection with the passage already quoted, which one could not but recall on that lovely spring morning; "The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the *voice of the turtle* is heard in our land," &c. Let the reader observe the accuracy. The return of the turtle-dove from warmer climes is in Syria an evidence of spring, just as in England the cuckoo tells us that "the winter is past." We were in the plain of the Jordan on the 3rd of April. "Search the glades and valleys," says Tristram, "even by sultry Jordan, at the end of March, and not a turtle-dove is to be seen; return in the second week in April, and crowds of doves are feeding on the slopes of the plain:" truly do the "*turtle* and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming" (Jer. viii. 7).

ought to be in the hands of every teacher and every Bible student. I find it quite a mine for addresses and sermons to children. It is published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

XC.

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee."—
JOHN ii. 11.

THE miracle which our Lord wrought at Cana of Galilee, when at a marriage-feast He changed water into wine, is marked with a special interest as being the first instance of the display of His Divine power. Why He should have chosen such an occasion to perform His first miracle, is a question which I think we are permitted to understand. The three great religious parties among the Jews in the time of our Lord were the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. Our Lord had been introduced, if I may venture to use the expression, to the Jewish world under the auspices of one who was considered by the people to be a strict Essene. The great preacher who had attracted such crowds by his stern and fiery eloquence—who had baptized the "Son of God" in the waters of Jordan, and who had publicly proclaimed Him to the multitudes as the "Lamb of God"—had also publicly denounced the "Pharisees and Sadducees," who came "to

His baptism" as "a generation of vipers." We see at once that it was deeply important that at the commencement of His ministry our Lord should dissociate Himself from a sect with which He was so likely to be confounded in the vulgar mind. The two great features of Essenianism were aversion to marriage and abstention from wine. "By giving public countenance to a marriage ceremony, still more by sanctioning the use of wine on such occasions, Jesus thus at the outset of His career, as He afterwards placed Himself in direct opposition to the other prevailing sects, so He had already receded from the practice of these religious mystics, who formed the third, and though not in numbers, yet in character and influence, by no means unimportant religious party." *

Our Lord's presence at the marriage festival at Cana of Galilee was a protest, not only against the Essenianism of His own day, but against the Monachism which He knew would afterwards prevail in the Christian Church. It is interesting to note that Essenianism, which was the lineal ancestor of Monachism, occupied the same home. The valley of the Jordan, like the valley of the

* Milman's "History of Christianity," vol. i. pp. 162, 163. The question of "Total Abstinence" is not in the slightest degree affected by this miracle. It rests, not on the ground that "it is unlawful to take," but that "it is expedient to abstain." The application of St Paul's argument with reference to "meats offered to idols," to a "weak brother," seems to me unassailable.—1 Cor. viii. 9-13.

Nile, is inseparably associated with the history of Monachism in the Church of Christ. Doubtless, in various periods of persecution, many a child of God found a hiding-place in the limestone caves of the Jordan valley, and of the wilderness of Judæa. They "wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." It was so at the time of the Edict of Decius, it was so again during the Arian persecution in the fourth century—

"When withering blasts of error swept the sky,
And Love's last flower seemed fain to droop and die,
How sweet, how lone the ray benign
On sheltered nooks of Palestine!
Then to his early home did Love repair,
And cheered his sickening heart with his own native air."

This well-known stanza of Keble refers to Jerome in his cave at Bethlehem. The history of Jerome tells us that it was not persecution alone that peopled these solitudes. The climate is admirably adapted for a life of visionary indolence and dreamy abstraction. Asceticism had its natural home in the neighbourhood of the Ghôr, and celibacy is the child of asceticism. Jerome, who was the chief means of introducing Monachism into the West, thought its life was one of sublime perfection. Are we surprised that tens of thousands of hermits crowded the hills of Judæa, when men like Basil and Chrysostom, Ambrose and Augustine, depicted in fervent language the holy and angelic delights of a life of virginity? Forget-

ful that marriage was instituted before the Fall, Jerome declared that "marriage fills the earth, celibacy fills heaven;" that poor unfortunate married folk that dwelt in houses were "vessels of wood and of earth;" that recluses like himself, who dwelt in caves, were "vessels of gold and of silver;" oblivious of the fact which we have noticed that their Lord and Master, who was neither Sadducee nor Pharisee, declared Himself to be anti-Essenian, when He "adorned and beautified with His presence and first miracle that He wrought" the marriage at Cana of Galilee.

"We need not bid, for cloistered cell,
Our neighbour and our work farewell,
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
For sinful man beneath the sky."

I could not but think, as the subject was pressed on my mind in the Valley of the Jordan, how similar was the current of the religious life in the hills before me to the river in the plain; it did not rise to the level of human life around it—the desert of heathenism was untouched. The Church's life began to flow like the Jordan, in a trench; whereas it was intended, like Ain Sultân, to be a "fountain of gardens."

XCI.

"Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite."—EZEKIEL xvi. 3.

THE object of this exposition is to show that the history of the earthly Jerusalem, in its lowly origin, and in the mighty change which passed over it after its capture by David, is the groundwork of the prophetic language. The passage, of which the verse before us forms a part, affords a striking parable, when so understood, of Israel's history; of the history of the Church of Christ; of the believer's state by nature, "conceived and born in sin;" and his state by grace, "perfect, saith God, through my comeliness which I had put upon thee."

If we turn to the marginal reading, we find that the word "birth" is, in the original, "cutting out" or "habitation." Bishop Wordsworth translates the sentence thus: "Thy *diggings* and thy bringings forth." In other words, the city of Jerusalem was not founded by the Jews themselves, but had been dug out and built by the heathen possessors of the land of Canaan. More than this, "it is

one of the peculiarities of Jerusalem that it became the capital late in the career of the nation ;” * that while “ Rome, Athens, Egyptian Thebes,” and “ the other ancient centres of life in Palestine itself—Hebron, Bethel, Shechem—extend back to the earliest periods of their respective histories ” —“ in those times Jerusalem was still an unknown and heathen fortress in the midst of the land.” To use the words of the prophet, “ Thy foundation and thy bringings forth are of the land of Canaan.”

Let us turn for a few moments to the early history of the city. It is evident that when the children of Israel entered the Promised Land, they tried to possess themselves of the fortress of Jebus, but in vain. “ As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out : but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day” (Joshua xv. 63). The children of Benjamin made the same attempt, but with a like success (the city of Jerusalem was on the confines of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin). “ And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem ; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day ” (Judges i. 21). For a moment I stay to notice an apparent contradiction. We are told in the eighth verse of the same chapter (Judges i.): “ Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with

* Stanley’s “ Sinai and Palestine,” p. 169.

the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire." The city of Jerusalem, like Rabbath-Ammon, Corinth, Athens, Edinburgh, &c., had an Acropolis. It was a dual city, as the very termination of the name implies. Zion was the "upper city," or "Upper Market," as Josephus calls it. The "lower city" or "Lower Market" was called Acra. The dual nature of the city at once explains the apparent discrepancy. Josephus tells us that Judah took the *lower city*, Acra, as recorded (Judges i. 8); but they could not take the *upper city*. "And when they" (*i.e.*, Judah and Simeon) "had taken the city, which was not under a considerable time, they slew all the inhabitants; but the *upper city was not to be taken* without great difficulty, through the strength of its walls and the nature of the place" (Antiquities, v. ch. ii., § 2). At the time of the sad story of the Levite (Judges xix.), which the mention of Phinehas (xx. 28) fixes early in the period of the Judges, Benjamin could hardly then have had so much footing as Judges i. 21 would indicate. We read, "But the man would not tarry that night, but he rose up and departed, and came over against Jebus, which is Jerusalem. . . . And when they were by Jebus, the day was far spent; and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn in into this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it. And his master said unto him, We will not turn aside hither, into the *city of a stranger*, that is not of the children of Israel; but will pass over to Gibeah"

(Judges xix. 10-12). It was not until David desired to remove his capital from Hebron to the more central position of Jerusalem that the stronghold of Jebus was taken. At first it seemed impregnable. "He took the lower city by force, but the citadel held out still." "And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither" (2 Sam. v. 6). The Jebusites, in their scorn, manned the walls with blind and lame, as if they were sufficient to protect such a fortress as theirs. "Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion." This stronghold became his palace, and he called it the "city of David." Thirty-seven years afterwards his son Solomon laid the foundation of the Temple on the neighbouring hill of Moriah, on the "threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite;" but a few years and this Jerusalem was the most magnificent city on the face of the earth.

Let us now turn from this brief historical sketch to the illustrative teaching of Ezekiel xvi. Jerusalem, by reason of its Canaanitish origin, becomes a striking picture of a people who no longer deserve the name of the seed of Abraham, but who, by reason of their idolatry and sin, are represented as the legitimate offspring of the original inhabitants of the land. The city thus becomes a type of the people. The "Amorite" and the "Hittite,"

as the most powerful tribes of Canaan, stand for the whole race. The prophet, under the image of an "infant cast out"—pitied and loved, protected and adorned, betrothed and married—unfolds their national history, reminding the Jews of their original helpless and destitute condition, and of God's marvellous grace and mercy. Under the fostering care of Jehovah, a small and despised people, ready to perish, grew into a mighty nation, whose renown was spoken of through the earth. The "infant cast out" had its counterpart in the history of Jerusalem itself. The city becomes a parable of the national history of the Jewish race. The Jebusite stronghold, in its heathen degradation, was to become the "city of the great King." It is captured by David, the Lord's anointed, and ere many years becomes a city of palaces, "the perfection of beauty," the "joy of the whole earth;" and that because God had chosen it for himself. The "infant cast out" is looked upon, clothed, decked, and adorned. Her raiment is "of fine linen and silver and brodered work;" and her "renown went forth among the heathen for her beauty; for it was perfect with my comeliness which I had put upon thee; saith the Lord God."

As we turn from the earthly Jerusalem, and think of its heathen origin, and of the consummation of its glory under David and Solomon, we think of its antitype in the heavenly city, "whose birth and nativity was of the land of Canaan;"

every citizen a living monument of Divine grace, "washed and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." A stronger than David has taken possession of a stronghold of sin and Satan; a greater than Solomon has adorned and beautified the soul with the graces of the Spirit, elected of God, and thus made perfect through the "comeliness" which He put upon it. The whole passage is "fragrant with the matchless grace and loving-kindness of God."

"Bathed in unfallen sunlight,
Itself a sun-born gem;
Fair gleams the joyous city,
The new Jerusalem:
City fairest,
Splendour rarest,
Let me gaze on thee."

XCII.

"And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord shewed him all the land of Gilead unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees unto Zoar."—DEUTERONOMY xxxiv. 1-3.

IT has been my privilege to stand on the "mountain of Nebo" and from the "top of Pisgah," to gaze upon the view presented to the eyes of Moses—"the view the most famous in all time, the proverb of all languages." I therefore gladly number this passage among the texts which I desire to illustrate. We shall find in it a striking example of the minute accuracy of the sacred narrative. Let me first say that my object will not be to enter into geographical details, but simply to touch upon them so far as they may help the reader to understand the Bible record. However I may curtail these points, this paper must necessarily exceed the limits of the ordinary expositions of this volume.

We had passed the early hours of a spring morning in Abel-Shittim, "the meadow of the

acacias," the oasis east of the Jordan upon which the prophet of Pethor looked from the height of Baal-Peor—

"Where by their genial signs
The desert-wearied tribes in sight of Canaan sleep."

We had ridden for hours amid a tropical luxuriance evoked by the streams from the roots of the mountains of Moab and Gilead, where Israel with the promised land full in view yielded so grievously to the seductive influences of the idolatries of Moab. We had traversed the plain from which the great prophet Elijah ascended in a "chariot of fire by a whirlwind into heaven," a fitting prelude it seemed to a visit to the heights among which the great lawgiver was honoured with a Divine burial, both to appear in the same vision of glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. We had gradually ascended the mountains of Gilead, with their vistas of ever-growing interest, until, crossing the Wady Na'ur, and passing the ridge of Jebel Zabood, we found ourselves in a moat-like valley, rich in pasture, which led us to the head of Wady Heshbân, where we were to pass our Sabbath by the spring whose waters in the plains below once slaked the thirst of the multitudes of Israel. After a short rest we remount, and under the escort of the most intelligent of Arab guides, the brother of Sheikh Goblan, we start for Jebel Nebâ. We follow the stream, descend the valley, and climb a ravine to

our left which would have brought us to Heshbân, the "city of Sihor." (The city of Heshbân was strategically the key of the north-west of the Belka, the country through which Israel descended into the Ghôr—the plain of the Jordan, Num. xxi. 21-26.) As we bear south-west up a narrow rocky glen—the Wady-es-Sauwaniyeh, we pass a lonely grave strewn with withered twigs and flowers—a desolate tomb "without a name," which reminds us strangely of the sleeping-place of him who had

"God's own hand, in that lonely land,
To lay him in the grave."

We rapidly rise and soon emerge on the crest of the Mishor—the Belka—the vast undulating table-land upon the heights of Moab. As we ride southwards, the prairie-like plain is before us, its surface broken here and there by dell and hollow. Looking towards Medeba we recall the conflict between Joab and Ammon, and see at once how armed chariots could be used in a country so level as this (1 Chron. xix. 7-19). We no longer wonder at the choice of Reuben, neither are we startled at the vastness of the flocks of "Mesha, king of Moab, who was a sheepmaster," and who paid a tribute of "a hundred thousand lambs and a hundred thousand rams," to the King of Israel. As we rode across patches of early wheat, where our horses sank to their fetlocks in the rich brown soil, I noticed a line of stones, each stone several

feet from the other, which served as boundary lines to mark the division of the fields. It occurred to me how easily we could remove the long line of stones a yard or two north or south without fear of detection. The very facility of wrong seemed to explain the stringency of the law, "Remove not the old landmarks" (Prov. xxii. 10; Deut. xix. 10, xxvii. 17).

We now ride due west along the ridge of a promontory. A deep valley opens out to our right (for which I was wholly unprepared). Our guide tells us that this is Wady Ain Musâ—"the Valley of the Springs of Moses." The dark tents of the Adwân and Beni-Sak'kr Arabs, far below, seem like reflections of the clouds in the sky above, whilst their flocks everywhere dot the mountain slopes. The valley to the south is the Wady Ain-el-Judaïd. A descent—a short plain—a rocky slope, and we are on the culm of the dome-like Jebel Nebâ. Our guide calls it Jebel Musâ. When we ask, "Is it not Jebel Nebâ?" he answers, "Jebel Nebâ is Jebel Musâ." For a few minutes I thought we were on Pisgah (our guide had never heard that name). It seemed to answer to the meaning of the word, which is a natural or descriptive one. It was a "fragment"—"cut off," separated from the crest which we had just left, with valleys on the remaining sides. It was the highest point of the ridge—the altitude of the whole district was lower than I had expected it to be. The panorama was magnificent.

I had stood on Neby Samwîl and Gerizim, on Safed and on the hill above Nazareth, on Olivet and Tekoa, on the highest western ridge of the Samaritan hills, and on the highest point of Carmel ; but this view, together with the one from Jebel Osh'a, stand out, with one exception, as the most comprehensive of Palestine views. As I swept the landscape with my field-glass, the words of God to Moses rose to my thoughts : " This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed ; I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither " (Deut. xxxiv. 4). To my great disappointment I discovered that certain main features of the view mentioned in the narrative were wanting. Even then I could not believe that the popular view was the true one, viz., that Moses " could not see the view with his bodily eyes," but that the vision was a supernatural one.* Canon Tristram's " Land of Israel " tells us that the same view is to be had to-day, and the Bible narrative simply says, " I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes "—and afterwards, as if to explain how so old a man could see such distant points, it tells us, " his eye was not dim." There are two guides to the true Pisgah—(1) It must be " over against Jericho ; " (2) The view from its summit must correspond accurately with the details given in the sacred

* Stanley's " Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 193 ; Speaker's " Commentary," *in loco*, &c.

narrative. We are told that Moses saw "the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees unto Zoar." A double headland, a mile and a half in front, was between us, the lower part of the plain of Jordan. Our guide called this headland "Ras Nebâ." As its elevation was lower than that of Nebo, we imagined that whilst we should obtain a better view of the Dead Sea, and "the plain of the valley of Jericho" from this foreland, the distant points would be lost. But such thoughts were soon to be removed! We urge our horses as fast as possible down the rocky slope of Jebel Nebâ, cross a narrow valley (Wady Haisa), and quickly make our way to the summit of the bluff.* Our guide, meanwhile, has told us that there is no view in the land like that we are about to see. Suddenly the plain of the Jordan bursts upon us. There is Jericho "the city of palm trees," right "over against" us, nestling under Mount Quarantania! We dismount, leaving our horses in the charge of our Arab guide. I was astonished to find the summit covered with extensive ruins. Professor Paine, of the American Palestine Exploration Fund, has described them with much minuteness, and has shown that they cover the site of Beth-Peor, from which Balaam "saw Israel

* Professor Paine writes: "From the base of this rockyslope (Jebel Nebâ) a series of five flat summits carry a level line far towards the west still, together looking like a great railway embankment, abruptly broken off as though its builders thought to carry it across the valley and failed."—*Identification of Pisgah*, p. 19, by *Palestine Exploration Society*.

abiding in his tents according to their tribes," and exclaimed as he beheld the order and beauty of the vast encampment amid the trees below, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel"! (Num. xxiv. 2, 5). In a few minutes we stand on our final watch-tower. The one prominent feature in the landscape is the Jordan valley, to which my eyes returned again and again, though I was none the less astonished at the extent of the mountain scenery which encircled it. The eyrie-like outlook on which we stood, with the plain immediately below us, though at such a distance, took me for a moment to the terrace of el-Murakhah, from which the traveller obtains so sudden and remarkable a view of the plain of Esdraelon with its encircling hills. Professor Paine compares it on a smaller scale to the "Plain of Martigny surrounded by elevated ranges save at the pass where the Rhone escapes." We look down on the Dead Sea in the chasm beneath us, the north-east end of it glimmering in the sun, its western side dark with shadows, while the southern end is black with clouds and storm. There lies the amphitheatre of Engedi under the cliffs of the western side. All to the south of it is lost in mist and gloom. The "South Country"—the "Negeb" which Moses saw through a depression in the hills to the south-west, and which the traveller may still see, is closed by a bank of clouds. Leaving Engedi, our eyes run up the coast-line beneath the beetling cliffs of the mountains of Judæa, rest

for a moment on the oasis beneath Ras-el-Feskhhah (the Moslem Pisgah), and curve the northern bay until we come to the mouth of the Jordan. We follow the serpentine line of green in its narrow trench-like bed until this lower valley opens out so as to embrace a cluster of white marl hills which enclose a triangle of rich verdure formed by the fork of the Jordan and the Jabbok. Now we come to the upper plain, with its glittering deserts and its oases. The tower of Jericho—the traditional house of Zacchæus—stands out like a sentinel guarding the oases on the verge of which it stands; the only building in sight, except the ruins of Kusr Hajla to the south-east, near the oasis of the same name. For a moment only our eyes rest on the low bastion-like hills to the north of the noble cliff of Quarantania, protruding into the plain from the mountains above. Immediately beneath us (on the east side of the Jordan) we look down on the park-like plain of Abel-Shittim, through which we have passed to-day, and where our tents were pitched last night, by the waters of Nimrîm—a much more extensive oasis than that on the western terrace. One glance more toward the north and we see that the plain gradually narrows until it seems entirely closed in by the mountains east and west of the Jordan.

Now we turn to the mountains. Let us follow the order of the Bible. The rocky slope of Jebel Nebâ effectually screens off the view to the east. We look north on bare hills, and a ridge dark

with its forest of oaks, until Jebel Osha, the highest mountain east of the Jordan, closes the nearer view. This is "the land of Gilead." We then look up the Jordan far away to the north. I had hoped to see Hermon, but a velvet-like pall of clouds curtain it off. I find that I was not mistaken in thinking that I could see the northern portion of Dan and the hills of Zebulon, on the western side of the Sea of Galilee. I saw the ridge of Carmel, and I think the top of the cone of Tabor; but here again the clouds were lying. I was disappointed, as I had wished to test for myself the possibility of seeing the "utmost sea" through the depression of the Plain of Esdraelon, though even then a difficulty would have remained, to which I shall presently refer.* Ebal and Gerizim, with Kurn Surtabeh in the foreground, are very clear. We follow the outlines of the hills of Ephraim, then of Benjamin, almost directly before us, until our eyes rest upon the well-known peak of Neby Samwil, then on two lower hills, and then on the top of Olivet. The Church of the Ascension stands out against the sky. The holy city can be seen, but not to-day (it was like an April day at home, and the lights and shadows on the hills, sea, and plain, marvellously increased the beauty of the scene, but capriciously hid some points of the view). Now we look on the wilder-

* Professor Paine tells us that the Mediterranean cannot be seen. "The utmost sea" in the narrative is connected with Judah, not with Asher.

ness of Judæa, with its forest of bare grey hills, above which rise Tekoah and the Frank mountain, on which we so lately encamped; and more interesting still, Bethlehem, with its fortress-like convent, crowning the terraces of the hill, an oasis amidst surrounding sterility. A thought passing through my mind, brings me down again to the plain of the Valley of Jericho below. The vision of Moses ends with Zoar, doubtless immediately beneath his feet at the south-east corner of the plain of Abel-Shittim.* Thus the circuit is completed, and we return to the point from which we started. The thought to which I refer is this: at one glance, right before us, we seem to have the main features of the life and mission of Christ brought

* Canon Tristram has been one of the leading advocates of "the north-end view" of the site of Sodom; and therefore, rightly, I believe, places Zoar to the north-east end of the Dead Sea. To place Sodom, and therefore Zoar, to the south end of the Dead Sea, is to contradict the simple and distinct statements of Scripture. He, however, I believe, falls into a grave mistake in his "Land of Moab" when he places Zoar on a mountain "3000 feet" above the Jordan valley (p. 330, &c.). We have but a slight notice in the Bible as to the position of Zoar, yet that little is decisive on two points: (1) That it was in a *plain*—"I cannot," said Lot, "escape to the mountain." . . . "And Lot *went up* out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountain" (Gen. xix. 19, 30); (2) That it was near to Sodom—"Behold now, this city is *near* to flee unto" (ver. 20), so near that Lot and his family traversed the distance between the first gleams of the morning light and the actual rising of the sun. "And when the *morning arose*, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise," &c. (ver. 15). "The sun *was risen upon the earth* when Lot entered into Zoar" (ver. 23). To compass the distance which included a climb of 3000 feet in so short a time, seems to me, to say the least, a very improbable thing.

in view. Bethlehem—his birthplace; Jordan—the scene of His baptism and of the inauguration of His ministry; Bethabara—where He called Andrew and Peter, the first of the apostolic band who were to evangelise the world; Jericho—the witness of one of His most remarkable miracles, and of His proclamation of mercy to the lost; the road from Jericho to Jerusalem—the scene of a parable; the Mount of Olives—speaking of His agony, and its slope, before us, of His ascension. As if to complete the sacred compendium, we think of Him as appearing to Joshua in the plain below, as “Captain of the host of the Lord” before His first advent; whilst the spot on which we stand so associated with Moses and Elias, and the top of Olivet in view, on which “His feet shall stand in the latter day,” carry our thoughts on to His second advent in power and great glory. I mention this thought because it is an instance of that which so often strikes the traveller in Palestine, viz., the wonderful confluence of sacred associations which each scene suggests. Professor Paine, speaking of the wonderful panorama from Jebel Siâghâh, says, “Out of all the tribes, the territory of not one is missing in this marvellous scene, if we may reckon the land of Simeon to be in the glimpse we get of the south country, and the extremity of the lot of Asher to be amid the most distant hills in the north, to the right of the retreat of Dan,” a panorama which, from its great extent and variety both of form and colour, would

in any land create the deepest pleasure in the mind of the beholder ; but here, while gazing on the one view in the world, the most comprehensive of sacred associations, the mould of Bible language, and the scene of almost the entire Bible history, the heart is stirred to its depths, and the eye drinks in the scene with the hope that it may be stereotyped on memory so long as life shall last. Are we surprised that the Jews could believe that God revealed to Moses on this mount the history of their race until the resurrection from the dead, that the Targum of Jonathan should paraphrase the passage which describes the view as the history of each tribe revealed by God to the lawgiver, and that Jarchi should carry this feeling so far as to translate, "unto the utmost sea," "to the latter day"? Two difficulties presented themselves to my mind as I stood upon Jebel Siaghâh. The first is this:—In the Bible we read that Moses went to the "top of Pisgah." Now the point from which we gained the panorama is at a lower elevation, as we have seen, than the mountain of Nebo. But looking from the plain beneath, Jebel Siaghâh is the "top" of the mountain. Jebel Nebâ cannot be seen. We have an exactly parallel case in 1 Kings xviii. 42, 43, where Elijah "went up to the top of Carmel," and yet afterwards said to his servants, "Go up now, look towards the sea."* Besides this, the preposition "*unto*" (Deut. xxxiv. 1—"unto the mountain of Nebo")

* See Exposition of 1 Kings xviii. 42, 43.

is really "*towards*," which accurately describes its geographical position. The second difficulty is not so easily removed. The "utmost sea" cannot be seen from any point of the district of Nebo. "The land of Judah, unto the utmost sea," may, however, mean whose borders reach the utmost sea, but the preposition *el*, "towards," is not the one used in Hebrew for "unto," but *adh*, which, according to Gesenius, "implies an actual arrival *quite* to such a limit." I must leave this in abler hands.

My paper is already longer than I had anticipated, but I cannot forbear to mention two most interesting discoveries of the Palestine exploration party, as illustrative of the accuracy of the Divine narrative. When Israel sent messengers to Sihon, king of the Amorites, he said, "Let me pass through thy land, we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards" (Num. xxi. 21, 22). Again Isaiah says, when he bewails the fate of Heshbon and Elealeh, "In the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting, the treaders shall tread out no wine in their presses. I have made their vintage shoutings to cease" (Isa. xvi. 10). The vine is no longer found on the highlands of Nebâ, but the exploration party found a winepress near Jebel Siâghâh, cut out of the solid rock, at the bottom was the outlet for the juice of the grape, the passage connecting it with the vat and holes below, &c. The second and still more interesting discovery is that of a road leading from

the plains of Moab beneath to Beth-Peor, the adjoining summit to that from which we gained our view. The path by which Israel descended into the plain below, and by which Moses ascended to the summit above—"the King's highway" (Num. xxi. 22). The Bedawin were well aware of the existence of this old road—they call it "the ancient way," but they add, "no one goes there now." This discovery throws light upon the whole passage which describes the route of the Israelites. I had previously thought that Israel descended from the Mishor to Abel-Shittim by the pass of Wady Heshbân.

Professor Paine closes his valuable report by saying, "The problems of the route of the Israelites, the stations of Balaam, the site of Peor, and the place of Moses' view of the land of Israel—not to recall other passages, are solved in the cluster of heights at the end of the range." He also adds, "the chain," *i.e.*, of Jebel Siaghâh, "its heights, headlands, valleys, springs, ruins, even in minutest particulars, fulfils and confirms the Bible."

Some Arabs who were lingering in the ruins of Beth-Peor were very anxious to take us down to the springs of Moses, but the gathering shades of night warned us that we must hasten our return. Many thoughts were in our minds as we silently retraced our steps. We remembered that "God buried Moses in the valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-Peor" (as the epilogue of our text tells us). How mysterious is God's provi-

dence! that after so many years of expectancy the prophet's hopes should have been frustrated, when on the very verge of being accomplished. We think of men like Tyndale passing away when a life's prayers and purposes were so soon to be fulfilled. We think of standard-bearers cut down in the time of the Church's sorest conflict. We think of friends removed as they stood on the threshold of a life which promised to be one of great usefulness. But we remember—Moses may die, but the God of Moses lives. Individuals may be removed, but the Church never dies. We feel it well to refer these mysteries back to an infinitely wise and loving Father, "all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment."

"O lonely tomb in Moab's land!
O dark Beth-Peor's hill!
Speak to these curious hearts of ours,
And teach them to be still.
God hath His mysteries of grace,
Ways that we cannot tell;
He hides them deep, like the secret sleep
Of him He loved so well."

As we passed once more the lonely grave, looking still more desolate amid the shadows of coming night, a solitary star above seemed to connect earth and heaven, and reminded us that the spirits of those who "sleep in Jesus," are even now before the Throne, "and they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb."

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